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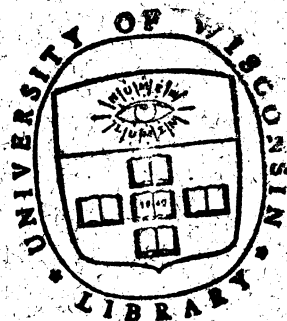
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## THE TIME ELEMENTS OF THE ORESTEAN TRILOGY

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BY

JONATHAN BAYLEY BROWDER, M. A.

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A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY,  
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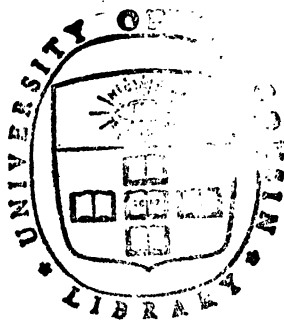
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## THE TIME ELEMENTS OF THE ORESTEAN TRILOGY.

## INTRODUCTION.

It will be the purpose of this paper to inquire into the length of time spanned by the action of the *Oresteia*. A great deal has been latterly written on this subject, particularly with regard to the individual plays. The *Agamemnon* has been compared with *The Merchant of Venice* in the matter of time elements.<sup>1</sup>

Antonio's bond, we are told many times, is to mature in three months, but all the action intervening between the giving and forfeiture of the bond runs its course in a few days. During this short space the remaining days stealthily slip out of count. We are thus confronted by a two-fold "show of time"—a long interval and a short interval. No attempt is made to harmonize them; the difficulty is not even hinted at. The dramatist chooses to compress the historical time of *three months* into the fictitious time of "*three days*", and he does it and "there's the end on 't." And why may not a long period of slow-paced inaction be dramatically measured by a short period, filled to bursting with rapid, crowding incident? With Antonio time travels slowly, at least, if not "on crutches"; with Bassanio, bent on love and venture, it "gallops." Nothing is easier than to lose the needless "creeping hours" in company with the latter. But Shakespeare's "short time" in no sense gives the lie to his "long time." If either is to be indulged, it is the former; for there can be only one answer to

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Horace Howard Furness, *The Variorum Shakespeare*, Vol. VII (1888) pp. 341-55.

the question, How much time actually elapses between the giving and forfeiture of the bond? The "short time" is a sheer dramatic illusion; the only true reckoning is that established by the duration of the bond.

In considering the Orestean trilogy, the essential unity of the separate plays should be constantly borne in mind; though individually complete, they are at the same time related to each other as the separate acts of a larger dramatic whole. Furthermore, not to stop with merely recognising our poet's accomplished purpose, we should enter into the problem of its execution and look at it, as far as we can, as he himself viewed it. We should be guided throughout by his own conception of dramatic completeness and by the observances which he followed in the pursuance of this end. The so-called canon of dramatic unities never reached a wholly positive stage in the art of Aeschylus, but his plays bear witness that he never departed from any one of the principles which it enjoined except for the attainment of higher ends. He never violates the rule without making some sort of amends, as, for example, in his violation of the unity of place in the *Eumenides*. Despite the fact that he transports us from Delphi to Athens, the real setting of his action undergoes no striking change. The temple of Athena is substituted for that of Apollo, and that is all; the general surroundings are substantially the same in either scene. His infringements of the unity of time are even more notably repaired. The period which actually elapsed between the capture of Troy and the return of the Greeks could not have been less than a week,<sup>2</sup> but in the earlier parts of the *Agamemnon* this interval is not only left out of view but squeezed

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<sup>2</sup> Without reckoning the time required for the destruction of the city, the division of the spoils and the various preparations for departure, and further without taking into account the delay incident upon the nocturnal storm which fell upon the fleet and scattered it, a lapse of some *three or four days* at least must be assumed as the most probable length of time required for the voyage from Sigeum to Nauplia. Compare the following passages: *Od.* III 180 ff.; *Il.* IX 362; *Soph. Phil.* 354, 480.

out of existence. The action of the *Prometheus* moves rapidly and, apparently, without a moment's halt: a little scrutiny, however, discloses the fact that its real duration is to be reckoned in days rather than hours.<sup>3</sup> Even the avowedly broken action of the *Eumenides* is invested with a surprising semblance of continuity. But it is useless to dwell further upon an obvious fact. Our poet's conception of dramatic unity clearly involved a more or less rigid observance of the unity of time. Now, then, when we remember that his great purpose in the *Oresteia* was to integrate the separate plays of the trilogy into a larger dramatic whole, and further that he found the critical situations of his larger theme scattered over a period of many years, we can appreciate the temptation that confronted him. It is the question thus suggested that I propose to investigate. Did Aeschylus discard the preexisting chronology of the Orestes story and substitute for it a new chronology of his own, or, on the contrary, did he accept it? My thesis is that he accepted it, but purposely obscured it wherever it interfered with the continuity of his action.

The problem presented by the "time-perspective" of the *Agamemnon* has been so exhaustively and ably discussed by Dr. Furness<sup>4</sup> and Professors Verrall<sup>5</sup> and Dyer<sup>6</sup> that I shall give it no place in the present inquiry, but proceed immediately to the time-interval between the *Agamemnon* and the *Choephoroi*. First of all I shall concern myself with our poet's conception of the actual length of this interval; I shall then consider briefly his dramatic treatment of it. .

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<sup>3</sup> See the remarks of Professor Lewis Campbell, *Classical Review*, Vol. IV p. 304.

<sup>4</sup> See reference given above.

<sup>5</sup> *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus*, London (1889): Introduction.

<sup>6</sup> "The Plot of the Agamemnon": *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. VII (1896) p. 95 ff.

## A.

THE TIME-INTERVAL BETWEEN THE AGAMEMNON AND THE  
CHOEPHORI.

Here there are two opposing theories. The first, and older of these, was, until a few years ago, the only one. It assumed, rather as a matter of course than as a matter in need of proof, the same long period of time between the death of Agamemnon and the return of Orestes which Homer, Pindar, Sophocles and Euripides have made familiar. The second view was advanced quite recently by Professor Seymour in an interesting article, "On the Duration of the Action of the Oresteian Trilogy."<sup>7</sup> He states his main assumption in the following words: "My thesis is, that according to Aeschylus, the action of the *Eumenides* closes only a few days (perhaps ten) after the *Agamemnon*." He thus makes the first two plays almost continuous in action. Professor Seymour's ideas have been accepted and championed by Professor Louis Dyer.<sup>8</sup>

The older conception must have been the ancient one. Scholars seem to have known no other and the scholia<sup>9</sup> evidently reflect the traditions of antiquity. It was, I believe, thoroughly hybrid in origin. Its unqualified acceptance for so many centuries must have been induced by the more concise and definite accounts that we find in other poets. In the *Odyssey*<sup>10</sup> we are specifically told that Aegisthus ruled over Mycenae *seven years* after Agamemnon's death, and that in the *eighth* Orestes returned from Athens and slew him. Again<sup>11</sup> Aegisthus is forewarned against the execution of his murderous designs, 'for Orestes, when he grows up (*ὁππότε ἂν ἡβήσῃ*) and yearns for home, will wreak vengeance upon him.' Pindar

<sup>7</sup> *Classical Review*, Vol. VIII (1894) p. 438 ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. VII pp. 95, 111, footnotes.

<sup>9</sup> *Cho.* 801, 954. The references here, as throughout, are to Wecklein's critical edition.

<sup>10</sup> III 304 ff. Compare IV 82 with III 311.

<sup>11</sup> I 41 ff.

and Sophocles assign no definite interval; it is everywhere evident, however, that a long time has elapsed.<sup>12</sup> The Euripidean version<sup>13</sup> tallies more closely with the Homeric account. The return of Menelaus after *seven years* of wandering, is represented as taking place only a few days after the murder of the usurpers.<sup>14</sup> The story, which we find in all three poets, of the child's rescue from death is, of itself, sufficiently conclusive, necessitating, as it does, the assumption of an extended interim for his adolescence. Particularly do the narratives of Sophocles and Euripides abound in chronological data; the few that we find in Homer are exceptionally lucid and explicit.

It was, then, from these (and similar<sup>15</sup>) external sources, rather than from Aeschylus himself, that our inherited idea of the Aeschylean Orestes returning home years after his father's death was formed. The justness of this supposition will force itself upon any one who will examine the *Oresteia* for precise and unimpeachable indications of time. If the data furnished us by the predecessors and contemporaries of Aeschylus had not survived, the orthodox conception of the period intervening between the action of the *Agamemnon* and that of the *Choephoroi* would hardly have passed so long unchallenged.

But notwithstanding this paucity of detail, there is still enough in the way of positive and circumstantial evidence to show that Aeschylus did not, in this chronological particular, radically depart from the traditional form of the Orestes story. These evidences are supplied chiefly by the *Choephoroi*; the most of them are individually weak, but, interpreted each in the light of the others, they seem to me not only strong but convincing.

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<sup>12</sup> *Pyth.* XI 17, 36; *El.* 3, 11, 41, 124, 164-65, 294-95, 303 ff., 782, 1154-55, etc.

<sup>13</sup> *El.* 284, 541, 578; *Iph. Aul.* 622, 1451; *Or.* 377.

<sup>14</sup> *Or.* 39, 470 ff.; *Hel.* 112, 776.

<sup>15</sup> It is presumable that Agias and Xanthus posited the delayed vengeance; Stesichorus certainly did (*Plut. De Sera Numinis Vindicta*, c. 10).

## INDICATIONS OF A LONG INTERVAL.

I. The following passage indicates an interval of many years:

*Cho.* 934-37,

ἔμολε μὲν δῖκα Πριαμίδαις χρόνῳ  
βαρύδικος ποινά·  
ἔμολε δ' εἰς δόμον τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονος  
διπλοῦς λέων, διπλοῦς Ἄρης.

"Late came due vengeance on the sons of Priam,  
Just forfeit of sore woe;—  
Late came there too to Agamemnon's house  
Twin lions, two-fold Death.

—*Plumptre.*

That the διπλοῦς λέων<sup>16</sup> refers to Orestes and Pylades seems now generally conceded by scholars; any other interpretation renders the comparison more or less pointless. It seems equally imperative to extend χρόνῳ to the second clause; otherwise it is otiose. The striking point of similarity is the *delayed* vengeance. The lines that follow (941-43) give confidence to this feeling:

ἐπολούξατ' ὦ δεσποσύνων δόμων  
ἀναφυγὰς κακῶν καὶ κτεάνων τριβᾶς  
ὑπὸ δυοῖν μαστόροιν.

"Shout ye, loud shout for the escape from ills  
Our master's house has seen,  
And from the wasting of his ancient wealth  
By that defiled pair.

—*Plumptre.*

II. The following passages indicate an interval of extended length:

## 1.

*Cho.* 959-62,

πάρα τε φῶς ἰδεῖν μέγα τ' ἀφηρέθη  
ψάλιον οἴκων,  
ἄναγε μάν, δόμοι· πολλὸν ἄγαν χρόνον  
χαμαιπετεῖς ἔκεισθ' αἰεί.

<sup>16</sup> The phraseology recalls ζευγὸς Ἀτρεϊδᾶν (*Ag.* 44), διπρονον κρατος (*Ag.* 111.) A latent balance is, no doubt, intended between the two pairs of avengers.

"At last we see the light.  
 Now is the bit that curbed the slaves" ta'en off:  
 Arise, arise, O house:  
 Too long, too long, all prostrate on the ground  
 Ye have been used to lie."

—*Plumptre.*

Compare the closing lines of Orestes' appeal in the earlier action of the play:

κόμῳ, ἀπὸ μικροῦ δ' ἂν ἄρεως μέγαν  
 δόμον, δοκοῦντα κάρτα νῦν πεπωκέναι.<sup>17</sup>

"O foster it, and raise from low estate  
 A house which now seems fallen utterly."

*Swanwick.*

This passage seems to me positive proof that our poet assumed a long lapse of time between the downfall of the house and its resurrection. The obvious query with regard to the date of the downfall hardly requires an answer; the period of the prostration is sufficiently defined by the circumstances which led to the resurrection. If the house rose into new life with the restoration of its rightful owners, its ruin must have begun with their expulsion. The destroying hand which undermined it must have been the hand of the usurpers. So much seems incontestable. Now is it supposable that Aeschylus thought of it as fallen either in whole or part while the king-stone of the structure was still in place? The supposition is an affront to reason as well as evidence. It is abundantly confuted by the testimony of the Argive elders, given in the hour of the king's murder:

ἀμχανῶ φροντίδος στερηθεῖς  
 εὐπαλάμων μεριμνᾷ  
 ὅπῃ τράπωμαι, πίνοντος οἴκου.<sup>18</sup>

"Ah, whither shall I fly?  
 For all in ruins sinks the kingly hall  
 Nor swift device nor shift of thought have I,  
 To 'scape its fall."

—*Morshead.*

<sup>17</sup> *οἰκετῶν*, Franz.

<sup>18</sup> 261-262.

<sup>19</sup> *Ag.* 1532-34. Cf. *Cho.* 48-52, 259-260.



Clearly the house fell when its master fell. The period of its prostration was the period which intervened between the death of Agamemnon and the punishment of his murderers.

That the period was a long one seems amply proved by *πολὸν ἄγαν χρόνον*. Not only does a strong emphasis fall upon these words, but in the last line they are reinforced by *αἰεί*, which, of itself, marks the condition dwelt upon as one of extended duration. Furthermore, it should be noted that the lines before us follow close upon the comparison instituted at the beginning of the stasimon between the long-delayed Trojan vengeance and that which had just been brought to pass in the house of Agamemnon. The two passages are supplemental and mutually corroborative. There is no reason for charging the chorus with undue exaggeration. The condition which they describe is happily ended. It is no longer a condition which they view through the magnifying lens of misery; on the contrary, they regard it more or less calmly as a sorrow that is disappearing for good.

## 2.

*Cho.* 461-63.

τρόμος μ' ὑφέρει κλύουσιν εὐγμάτων.  
τὸ μόρσιμον μένει πάλα  
εὐχομένους δ' ἂν ἔλθοι.

"A shudder creeps over me as I hear the prayers. The fated vengeance hath long been waiting, but it will surely come at the call of prayer."

The words of the chorus refer broadly to the numerous invocations scattered through the *commos*; immediately, they are suggested by Electra's appeal in the preceding line.

Before discussing this passage it will not be out of place to ascertain our poet's answer to the question, when must the doer suffer? how *soon* does retribution follow upon sin? It has been asserted that the "essence of Aeschylus' conception of divine retribution was *swiftness*."<sup>20</sup> If I understand him rightly, he clearly defines his conception in the following passages:

<sup>20</sup> Prof. Louis Dyer, *Harvard Studies in Class. Phil.*, Vol. VII p. 108.

θάρσει χρόνῳ τοι κυρίῳ τ' ἐν ἡμέρᾳ  
θεοὺς ἀτίζων τις βροτῶν δώσει δίκην.<sup>21</sup>

κελαιναὶ δ' Ἑρινίες χρόνῳ  
τύχῃρον ὄντ' ἄνευ δίκας  
παλιντυχεῖ τριβῇ βίου  
τιθείῳ ἀμαυρόν, ἐν δ' ἀί-  
στοις τελέθοντος οὔτις ἀλκά.<sup>22</sup>

βωμὸν αἶδεσαι δίκας,  
μηδέ νιν  
κέρδος ἰδὼν ἀθέω  
ποδὶ λάξ ἀτίσης·  
ποινὰ γὰρ ἐπέσται.  
κύριον μένει τέλος.<sup>23</sup>

τὸν ἀντίτολμον δὲ φαμὶ περαιβάδαν  
τὰ πολλὰ παντόφυρτ' ἄνευ δίκας  
βιαίως ξὺν χρόνῳ καθήσειν  
λαΐφος ὅταν λάβῃ πόνος  
θραυομένας κερκίας.<sup>24</sup>

These generalizations distinctly imply that retribution *might* be far removed in time from the sin which it punished. Lines 59–63 of the *Choephoroi* are even more explicit: 'Some are punished in the morning of transgression, some at eventide, and others even die unpunished.' For specific cases, the sons of Oedipus may be regarded as falling under the first category. Their punishment was instantaneous; compare the words of the chorus: νῦν δὲ τρέω μὴ τελέσῃ καμψίπους Ἑρινίς.<sup>25</sup> Up to the fatal moment when lust of fraternal blood drove them to mutual slaughter, they were still within the pale of salvation.<sup>26</sup> Paris and Laius, on the other hand, went long unscathed before the astral bell of their doom was sounded; and Atreus, it is well known, died leaving the consequences of his crime as a legacy

<sup>21</sup> *Supp.* 740–41.

<sup>22</sup> *Ag.* 468–73.

<sup>23</sup> *Eum.* 542–47.

<sup>24</sup> *Eum.* 556–560.

<sup>25</sup> *Sept.* 715–76.

<sup>26</sup> Compare 673 *ff.*

to his son. It is obvious, therefore, that Aeschylus entertained no categorical notion as to the when of divine retribution. It was, as he thought of it, purely a matter of *divine pleasure*. The appointed hour (κύριος ἡμέρα, μοιρόκρατον ἡμαρ) might be soon or it might be late, according as it suited the will of Heaven. In other words, the Aeschylean gods punished in their own good time.<sup>27</sup>

So much by way of approach to the lines before us. A strong interpretative light is thrown upon their meaning, as I understand them, by lines 374-78 of the *Agamemnon*:

Δία τοι ξένιον μέγαν αἰδοῦμαι  
τὸν τάδε πράξαντ' ἐπ' Ἀλεξάνδρῳ  
τείνοντα πάλαι τόξον, ὅπως ἂν  
μήτε πρὸ καιροῦ μήθ' ὑπὲρ ἄστρον  
βέλος ἡλίθιον σκήψειεν.

"Zeus god of host and guest, I confess him great, who hath wrought this vengeance for Paris' sin, though long he bent his bow, that so neither heaven-high the bolt might go, nor short of the mark might fall." *Verrall*.

The vengeance decreed against Paris was *purposely* delayed. And so it was in the case of the conspirators. Expanded into their full implication the words of the chorus may be paraphrased thus: "Full many a day has passed and the stroke of vengeance has not yet fallen; but this earnest appeal for help — the auspicious air of the occasion — tells me that the hour of divine pleasure is at hand; Heaven will surely delay no longer." Compare the sentiment with which they inaugurate the *commos*:

ἀλλ' ὦ μεγάλαί Μοῖραι, Διόθεν  
τῇδε τελευτᾷ  
ἦ τὸ δίκαιον μεταβαίνει.

'Justice is at last changing sides. Heaven grant that it may all end here.'

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<sup>27</sup> The lines quoted by Stobaeus (Aesch. *Frag.* 22) from the lost *Bacchae*,  
τό τοι κακὸν ποδῶκες ἔρχεται βροτοῖς  
καὶ τὰμπλάκημα τῷ περῶντι τὴν θέμιν.

must have been motivated apropos of a particular case, possibly the punishment inflicted upon Pentheus.

There seems to me no doubt that the idea prominent in μένει is that of *waiting*. This meaning is strongly demanded by the opposition established in line 462. The words εἰχομένους δ' ἂν ἔλθοι plainly imply that vengeance *might have come before, but had not*. The antithesis required is that of delay. Furthermore, if the notion of *fixedness* is emphasized, τὸ μόρσιμον must signify *the decree of Fate*; but when we get to ἔλθοι it manifestly means *the Fate that executes*. The personification is unavoidable with the second verb, and we should naturally expect it with the first. Indeed, every tangible indication goes to show that the meaning claimed for μένει was just that which our poet intended it to bear. He meant to tell us that the vengeance decreed against the murderers of Agamemnon was delayed in its execution. And not only this; he tells us that the period of delay was not a brief one. This is established by πάλαι. It seems inconceivable that the chorus are overstating the real duration of the action which they are describing. The exaggeration would be motiveless except as a protest against the tardiness of vengeance. However slowly the time may have passed, however impatient the old women may have previously been, their state of mind at the time of speaking is clearly adverse to the expression of such a feeling. It is surely too much to suppose that any human being would quake in his boots (τρόμος μ' ὑφέρπει) at the approach of desired retribution and in the same moment cry out against it as long belated. The whole spirit of the passage tends to the conviction that they are speaking soberly and representing the delay as it really was. But for a more positive argument, πάλαι, referring to the *recent* past, was a *colloquialism* which the tragedians seem to have avoided in lyric parts.

A careful inquiry into the history of πάλαι discloses the fact that it had even as far back as Homer two clearly defined uses. In primary and natural function it referred to the *distant* past; in secondary and developed function it often referred to the *recent* or *immediate* past. The distinctness of the two uses has

long been recognized. Compare the following passages from Eustathius:

τουούτων δὲ καὶ τὸ πάλαι πολλάκις παρὰ τοῖς Ἀττικοῖς, οὐδ' αὐτὸ δηλοῦν αἰὲ χρόνον μακρότητα.<sup>28</sup>

ἴσμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἡ Ἀθῆναι πάλαι οἶδε λέγειν οὐ μόνον τὸ ἀφ' ἱκανοῦ χρόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ πρὸ ὥρας ἢ καὶ στιγμῆς.<sup>29</sup>

τοιαύτης δυνάμει καὶ τὸ πάλαι παρὰ τε τῷ κωμικῷ καὶ ἑτέροις δέκνυται, οὐκ αἰεὶ μακρὸν χρόνον σημαῖνον, ἀλλ' ἔστιν οὐ καὶ πρόσφατον Ἀττικῶς, ὡς μάλιστα δῆλον καὶ παρὰ Σοφοκλεῖ ἀλλαχοῦ τε καὶ ἐν τῷ (El. 676).<sup>30</sup>

These comments obviously proceeded from a feeling that the word normally and naturally conveyed the notion of an extended lapse of time, and that the short-time usage was in some way peculiar. As a matter of fact, the only difference between the two uses was a difference of attitude on the part of the speaker. In the former case he was representing a distant occurrence as it really was; in the latter case he was representing a recent occurrence as not recent. The very soul of the short-time *πάλαι* was exaggeration.<sup>31</sup> This fact, so easily prov-

<sup>28</sup> Il. XXIII 502.

<sup>29</sup> Il. IX 527.

<sup>30</sup> Il. VIII 108.

<sup>31</sup> This is well illustrated by a familiar passage in the Knights (1152 ff.):

- ΠΑ.      ὦ δῆμ' ἐγὼ μέντοι παρεσκευασμένος  
            τρίπαλαι κάθημαι βουλούμενός σ' εὐεργετεῖν  
ΑΔ.      ἐγὼ δεκάπαλαι γε καὶ δωδεκάπαλαι.  
            καὶ χιλιόπαλαι καὶ προπαλαιπαλαίπαλαι.  
ΠΑ.      ἐγὼ δὲ προσδοκῶν γε τριδμυριόπαλαι  
            βδελύττομαι σφω καὶ προπαλαιπαλαίπαλαι.

Compare the dialogue between Pisthetaerus and the Poet in the Birds (920 ff.):

- ΠΙΣΘ.    ταυτί σὺ πότε' ἐποίησας; ἀπὸ πόσου χρόνου;  
ΠΟΙ.    πάλαι, πάλαι δὴ τήνδ' ἐγὼ κληῖζω πόλιν.  
ΠΙΣΘ.    οὐκ ἄρτι θύω δεκάτην ταύτης ἐγώ,  
            καὶ τοῦνομ' ὥσπερ παιδίῳ νῦν δὴ θέμην;

The Pierian beggar retreats under lyric cover and defies conviction:

ἀλλὰ τις ὠκεῖν Μουσάων φάτις,  
οἶάπερ ἵππων ἀμαρυγὰ.

A partial parallel to *πάλαι* is afforded by *χρόνω* as occasionally em-

ed, tells us immediately the story of its birth and the place of its abode. An examination of the literature will show that it was regularly confined to a *conversational* setting. It was undoubtedly a colloquialism in origin, and for all practical purposes it remained so. This is indicated by the notable frequency with which it occurs in Greek that is professedly colloquial in character<sup>33</sup> and by its conspicuous absence elsewhere.

played by Euripides. Contrast its colloquial use (*Hip.* 1181, *Med.* 904, 908, *Or.* 1201, *I. T.* 1336) with its serious import (*Alc.* 1036, *Andr.* 782, *Bacch.* 294, *Hel.* 1468, *El.* 578, 579, 952, *Heracl.* 869, 941, 1029, *H. F.* 607, *Rhes.* 893, *Phoen.* 166, 294, 305, 872, 1043). The adjective *χρόνιος* is similarly used (Compare *Andr.* 84, *Hel.* 1384, *Supp.* 91, *Ion.* 403, *Or.* 151, 234, *Rhes.* 559 with *El.* 585, 1157, 1308, *Ion.* 64, 304, 469, 1425, 1615, *Hel.* 566, 645 1035, 1232, *Cycl.* 249, *Or.* 475, 485, 740, *Phoen.* 14, 387).

It is hardly necessary to observe that the colloquial weakening of strong time-words is a phenomenon common to all languages. *Dudum* and *pridem* are familiar examples in Latin. In English one hears every day the most astonishing overstatements of the most paltry periods of time. The slang of exaggeration not infrequently expands a few innocent hours into *ages*, *centuries*, *a month of Sundays*, *an awful long time*, etc. Contrast the use of *long ago* in the following passages:

“Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
For old, unhappy, far-off things  
And battles long ago.”

—WORDSWORTH, *The Solitary Reaper*.

“*Gaol.* Come, sir, are you ready for death?  
*Post.* Over-roasted rather; ready long ago.”

—SHAKESPEARE, *Cymb.* V. 4, 154.

<sup>33</sup> Aristophanes shows fifty one occurrences of *παλαιοι*, and in at least thirty five of these the allusion is certainly to the recent past: *Ach.* 575, 885, 1088, 1114, *Eq.* 125, 236, 314, 690, 731, *Nub.* 4, 1036, *Vesp.* 317, 320, 825, *Av.* 49, 311, 921, 1019, 1641, *Lysist.* 55, 1629, 1033, *Thesmoph.* 1026, *Ran.* 237, *Eccles.* 313, 503, 877, 948, *Pl.* 157, 261, 410, 642, 937, 1029, *Pax.* 475. In prose Dialogue the short-time coloring is so much the rule (cf. *Protag.* 362 A; *Phaedr.* 257 C, 273 D; *Gorg.* 456 A, 458 B, 489 C; *Phaedr.* 63 D E, 79 C, 114 D; *Crit.* 43 B, etc.—*Xen. Oec.* XVIII 10, XIX 14.) that in one instance we find Socrates safeguarding the serious force of the word (*Apol.* 18 B): *ἐμοῦ γὰρ πολλοὶ κατήγοροι γερόνασι πρὸς ἡμᾶς καὶ παλαιοὶ πολλὰ ἤδη ἔτη καὶ οὐδὲν ἀληθὲς λέγοντες*. The words *πολλὰ ἤδη ἔτη* are added rather for the sake of clearness than for emphasis. See Stallbaum's excellent note on the passage.

The first traces of the usage appear in Homer, as I have intimated

It is little short of proved by the testimony of the tragedians, particularly Sophocles.

Aeschylus uses *πάλαί* fourteen times, Sophocles fifty-nine times, Euripides thirty-nine times. In Aeschylus there are only three<sup>33</sup> cases in which the word certainly refers to the recent past and in Euripides only fifteen;<sup>34</sup> in Sophocles there are no less than thirty three.<sup>35</sup> The aggregate number of examples of the short-time usage in the three poets is fifty one. All of these without exception occur in dialogue. There is no trace of the usage in monologues or choral songs; under such conditions *πάλαί* always carries us well back into the past. Even more significant for my argument is the fact that only *one*<sup>36</sup>

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above. Four of the eighteen examples found in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* refer to the recent past and it is notable that all save one occur in dialogue speeches (*Il.* IX 105; *Od.* XX 293, XXIII 29). The exception is *Il.* XXIII 871. In the archery contest Teucer, shooting first, severs the cord by which the dove is bound. The liberated bird immediately takes flight and Meriones in his hurry to shoot rushes up (*σπερχόμενος*) and snatches the bow from Teucer's hand (*ἐξείρυσσε χειρός*): *ἀτὰρ δὴ δῖστὸν ἔχεν πάλαί, ὥς ἴδεν* — "The arrow he had long had in hand, while he (Teucer) was shooting." The poet throws himself into the feelings of the expectant archer. *πάλαί* reflects the impatience and eagerness with which he awaited his turn.

<sup>33</sup> *Ag.* 592, *Pers.* 293, *Prom.* 871. In *Cho.* 214, *εἰς ὃφιν ἦκεις ὄνκερ ἐξήυχου πάλαί*, the reference is altogether doubtful, Orestes may have in mind only the prayers which he has just heard from his place of concealment. So Electra appears to understand him (cf. *κατευγμάτων* 217 with *κατευχόμεναι* l. 135.) See, however, the explanation of Paley (l. "208"). In *Prom.* 1030 there is doubtless some exaggeration, but it is not necessary to suppose that Prometheus' determination was recently formed.

<sup>34</sup> *I. A.* 332, *Bacch.* 824, *El.* 357, 568, 653, *Hip.* 1085, *Med.* 1116, *Alc.* 421, *Heracl.* 644, *Or.* 860, 1425, *Troad.* 239, 624, *Phoen.* 1329, *Cycl.* 649. The instances of the normal usage are *Bacch.* 1349, *Hel.* 63, 419, 1658, *Heracl.* 1, 482, *Hip.* 23, *Ion.* 826, 994, 1342, 1429, *Cycl.* 140, 450, *Or.* 129, 572, 811, 933, *Rhes.* 321, 329, 696, 465, *El.* 513, *Phoen.* 438, 867.

<sup>35</sup> *Phil.* 589, 806, 906, 913, 966, 1218, *O. T.* 289, 449, 973, 1067, 1112, 1161, *O. C.* 629, 1252, 1628, *El.* 676, 920, 1201, 1119, 1332, 1358, 1477, 1481, *Ant.* 279, 289, 559, 1036, *Trach.* 87, 414, 1121, *Ai.* 5, 20, 36.

<sup>36</sup> Euripides, *Troiad.* 239; a stichomythic line at the beginning of a com-

of these occurrences is found in lyric meter. Moreover, it is particularly noteworthy that Sophocles, who employs the short-time usage with such conspicuous freedom, admits it only in dialogue trimeters. The conclusion to which these facts lead is inevitable. The use of *πάλαι* in allusion to the recent past was an idiom of the popular speech which the tragedians adopted with reservation. They never allowed it except where the conditions were distinctly favorable to the admission of such colloquialisms.

Returning now to the passage under consideration, I maintain that the environments are not only not colloquial, but the reverse. In the first place, the meter is lyric. Secondly, the conditions, properly speaking, are not even those of dialogue. The triangular *commos* brought to an end by the lines with which I am concerned is almost devoid of conversational color; in dominating character it is a triple series of alternating monodies. The speakers rarely address each other and even then only incidentally. The closing words of the chorus are seemingly spoken in monologue. There is nothing to show (as *τέκνον* 322, *ὦ παῖ* — *φωνεῖς* 371, *σῶ* — *κλύεις* 441, *συντέτραινε* — *ὄργῃ* 450) that they are addressing the children, while, on the contrary, *εὐχομένοις* is best understood as meaning *for those who pray*, that is, *if one prays*. Lastly, even if the colloquialism were otherwise admissible, it would be peculiarly out of harmony with the solemnity of thought and feeling with which the old women are obviously invested when the words are spoken. In the hour of prayer one lays aside the happy-go-lucky commonplaces of language. In view of these considerations, I feel confident in claiming that *πάλαι* does not indicate a brief period of time. It is used in its normal function and, in this function, it can only mean that the death of Agamemnon was an occurrence well back in the past.

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*mos* in which Talthybius speaks in trimeters and Hecuba in broken lyrics whose theme is chiefly dochmiac.



## III. Less definite indications of a long interval.

## 1.

*Cho.* 1008-11,

ἔδρασεν ἢ οὐκ ἔδρασεν; μαρτυρεῖ δέ μοι  
 φᾶρος τόδ', ὡς ἔβαψεν Αἰγίσθου ξίφος.  
 φόνου δὲ κηκίς ξὺν χρόνῳ ξυμβάλλεται  
 πολλὰς βαφὰς φθείρουσα τοῦ ποικίλματος.

*Ξυμβάλλεται* has been variously explained as meaning (1) *contributes, helps*, (2) *agrees with, tallies with*, (3) *conjectando agnoscitur*. The last mentioned of these explanations, which seems never to have met with wide acceptance, has long been discarded; the second still has numerous advocates, but of recent years has been losing ground; it is the first that is most generally approved at the present day. But notwithstanding the diversity of opinion obtaining with regard to the meaning of the verb, no doubt has heretofore been expressed as to the notion conveyed by *χρόνῳ*. Professor Seymour, of course, finds in it only a period of days, but the scholars of the past have inferred from it a period of years; they have universally assumed that the stains upon the robe were of long standing. And this assumption can be laid only in small part to the influence of the long-interval hypothesis. A brief analysis of the interpretations mentioned will show that it is vitally essential to two of them.

1. *contributes, helps.*

"Look, how the spurted stain combines with time  
 To blur the many dyes that once adorned  
 Its pattern manifold."

—*Morshead.*

"And the blood-stain helps time's destroying work,  
 Marring full many a tint of pattern fair."

—*Plumptre.*

"It is the welling blood which hath aided time  
 In spoiling the many hues of the embroidery."

—*Verrall.*

Is it reasonable to suppose that a period of a week could produce the effect here described? Indeed, the supposition would be not only unreasonable but absurd. Blood-stains alone may

mar, but why the cooperation of time? Clearly the robe was faded as well as disfigured; both chemical action and the agency of time had wrought upon it, and, wherever the two were cooperative, the original colors had been dimmed and the patterns blurred. It is necessarily implied that the process of destruction had been long in operation.

On first sight, this interpretation is very attractive, but, when we look deeper, it bears a very shadowy relation to the lines that precede. The dominant notions are the faded appearance of the robe and the cooperation of time and blood in producing this effect. Why should Orestes be concerned with these particulars? What significance have they? In what way do they explain or enforce the witness-bearing character of the blood-stains? "The whole meaning," according to Professor Verrall, "is simply this, 'How can I doubt the fact [i. e., of her guilt] when I have before my eyes a memorial of it, on which, though all is [faded with age, the traces are still visible?'" If the stains *were* faded, this is just what we should expect Orestes to say, but the Greek words do not even remotely suggest this fullness of meaning. In the translations quoted above there is not an inkling of it—not even in Professor Verrall's. And quite naturally so. It is impossible to secure the antithesis desired except by crushing out any notion of cooperation between time and blood. In other words, we must conclude that no intimate connection exists between the lines under consideration and those that precede, or else seek a different interpretation for *ἐνυβάλλεται*.

2. *agrees with, tallies with.*

In conformity with this explanation of the word the surface meaning of line 1008 will be: 'The stain of the oozing blood agrees (tallies) with the time'; that is, with the date of her crime or the period of time that has elapsed since her crime was committed. Taken alone, this statement would be concrete and intelligible enough, but, when we endeavor to reconcile it with the requirements of the context, the need of further explanation becomes obvious and unavoidable. To say of the

stains that they agree with the time that has elapsed since their origination is one thing; to say that they mar the colors of the robe is quite another. What larger and deeper meaning did Orestes wish to convey through the medium of these isolated notions?

Our translators, to whom we naturally look for help, rather confuse than enlighten us. Campbell's version follows closely the word-order of the original and we gather from it that the stains, *being as old as the crime*, were faded with age:

"The stains, agreeing with the years,  
Mar all the pattern with their pallid hue."

Blackie's is pointed and, in the main, satisfactory, but we are puzzled to know what has become of *εὐμβάλλεται*:

"The time  
Hath paled the murtherous spot, but where it was  
The sumptuous stole hath lost its radiant dye."

Even more acceptable is Minckwitz's rendering, but it carries us still farther away from the original:

"Nicht löscht die Zeit die blutgeronnen Flecken aus.  
Die dieses Purpur's Farbenglanz besudelt."

All of these translations seem to emanate from one and the same understanding of the passage, but they do not at first or even second glance strike us as meaning one and the same thing. Following the lead of initial impressions, we should rather conclude that they represent entirely different interpretations. The common view-point is probably to be got at in the following way. It is first of all taken for granted that the queen's crime was years back in the past. In conformity with this fundamental premise it is further assumed that the stains upon the robe were visibly faded. Proceeding, then, upon the basis of these data we may suppose that Orestes' real meaning is this: 'The marring effect of the blood-stains is in keeping with the (long) time that has elapsed since their origination,' that is, 'It is just what would be expected in view of their age;' which is to say further, 'Though old and faded, the stains still mar the hues and patterns of the embroidery.' From this

point a little recasting and change of words will bring us easily enough to the translations of Blackie and Minckwitz. Thus explained and re-explained Orestes' words make excellent sense, but why, one inevitably asks, should they require all this explanation? If the meaning arrived at is what our poet really intended, it is hardly going too far to say that he chose a very unobvious and indirect path in the expression of it.

It should be observed that Orestes is not drawing an inference as to the probable age of the blood-spots. The moment we think of him as concluding from the appearance of the stains that a length of time must have elapsed since their origination equal in extent to the period of time that had elapsed since the murder, the situation changes entirely; a motive for the inference must be immediately established. To this end it might be supposed that the matricide was, for the passing moment, either in actual doubt as to the identity of the robe before him or, better still, that he was seeking to establish its identity judicially. If such were his purpose, which seems altogether unlikely, his thought fully expressed would run somewhat thus: "How can I doubt the testimony which this memorial of her guilt supplies? It must be the selfsame instrument of her crime, for the stains upon it clearly *date* from the time when her crime was committed." This would give a very desirable prominence to *ἐμβάλλεται*, but the thought transition seems to me abrupt and unnatural. If I in any wise grasp his meaning, there would seem to be something of this point of view in Wilamowitz-Möllendorf's translation of the lines: "*der blutfleck, der des purpurs glanz verstört, ist alt, so alt wie ihr verbrechen.*"

So far I have proceeded on the traditional assumption with regard to the age of the blood-stains; on the counter-hypothesis that they are only a few days old the interpretation will still hold good. The stains, which in the former case were old and faded, now become fresh. With this change of premises, Orestes says quite as simply as before: "The marring effect of the stains is just what would be expected in view of the (short)

time that has elapsed since their origination," that is, "They are fresh and distinct." Under these circumstances it would seem futile to urge the passage under consideration as evidence in favor of the long-interval hypothesis. And indeed it would be so, if *ἐνυβάλλεται* could be reasonably established in the meaning that is claimed for it. As it is, this meaning is little short of conjectural. It is not only unnatural, but it obscures the eminently active character of the verb and, so far as my knowledge goes, is altogether without parallel. To express the notion of *tallying* or *corresponding with* we should expect some verb that is purely intransitive, for example *συντρέχω*, *συμβαίνω* or *συνπίπτω*. Added to this fundamental shortcoming, it further repels the indulgence which might otherwise be accorded it by perplexing and confusing us. Instead of opening a straightforward approach to the meaning of the passage, so simple and obvious that any and all translations based upon it would be instantly interchangeable, it carries us through a hard hour's drill in mental gymnastics and leads us to more than one possible goal. Indeed, no stronger presumption can be raised against this interpretation of the word than the alacrity with which latter-day scholars have abandoned it and pinned their faith to another which, even at its best, seems hardly more satisfactory.

### 3. *conjectando agnoscitur.*

Schütz explains: "*κηκὶς φόνου* est sanguinis ex vulneribus scaturigo de qua etiam post longum tempus liceat conjecturam facere ex maculis quæ vestis colorem multis locis vitiauerint." Pauw's point of view is somewhat different: "Caedis vero tinctura post tempus diutinum conjicitur, varios colores vestis corrumpens." The very essence of this ungainly explanation consists in emphasizing the period of time indicated by *χροὸν* as one of great length; the stains are not only dimmed with age, but well nigh obliterated.

Both of the interpretations now current seem to me open to serious objection. It is easy to find fault with them, but at the same time it is difficult to improve upon them. Nevertheless, I

shall venture to propose another solution, which, I feel, more nearly satisfies the requirements of the case. In lines 1008-9 Orestes' attention is riveted upon the fact that the robe is stained with his father's blood (ὡς ἔβαψεν Αἰγίσθου ξίφος); he finds in this fact ocular proof of his mother's guilt. As I understand it, the purpose of the succeeding lines was to explain and thereby enforce the evidential character of the blood-stains. The context requires an antithesis: 'Despite its age, the stain of the oozing blood is still distinctly visible.' The important point is the distinctness with which the stain is envisaged, and what is wanted is an explanation of *ἐνυβάλλεται* that will give convincing expression to this fact. I should read τῷ χρόνῳ with Herwerden and translate the verb (as the passive of *τινά τινι συμβάλλειν*) *is pitted against, fights against, resists, defies*. The whole passage may be rendered thus: "Did she do it or did she not do it? I have a clear-spoken witness in the robe before me, seeing how Aegisthus' sword has dyed it. For the stain of the oozing blood defies (holds fast against) the assaults of time in marring the patterns and hues of the embroidery"; that is, "despite the hostility of time, the stain is still distinctly visible." The thought uppermost in Orestes' mind was the persistent vitality with which, in spite of age, the blood-stain had maintained its identity. The original color of the dye was, of course, no longer apparent, the robe itself may have been perceptibly faded; but these particulars were of no significance to him. He had no concern with the effacing processes of time, except in so far as time had not destroyed the material evidences of his mother's guilt.

In essential character the stains upon the robe are merely symbols. As no small part of their meaning they typify the

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<sup>17</sup> The assumed corruption is easily accounted for. Some well-intentioned scholiast, understanding the verb in the sense of *contributes* and realizing that τῷ χρόνῳ *ἐνυβάλλεται* would naturally mean "contributes *in the interest of* time" and conceiving the poet's real meaning to be "contributes *with* time," helped out the Dative of Accompaniment with a σύν on the margin. The ubiquitous blunderer came along and incorporated it in the text.

indelbleness of the moral stain which the queen had incurred in murdering her husband. One of our poet's most insistent sentiments is the impossibility of atoning for unrighteous bloodshed: the moral stain incurred by the murderer was ageless and indestructible. Hand in hand with this sentiment, and often serving as a medium for its expression, there goes a corresponding notion with regard to the physical blood-stain. He more than once voices the popular belief in its indestructibility. Whether he actually held to this superstition or merely accepted it as a convenient symbol is immaterial. For poetic and religious purposes it was a striking conception, and he uses it repeatedly and effectively. The correlation of the two ideas is clearly seen in the following passage:

ἐπαδὼν αὐτοκτόνως  
αὐτοδαΐκτοι θάνωσι,  
καὶ χθονία κόνις πύη  
μελαμπαγὲς αἷμα φόνιον  
τίς ἂν καθαρμοὺς πόροι;  
τίς ἂν σφε λούσειεν;<sup>38</sup>

In the Agamemnon the king's murder is characterized as αἷμα ἀνιπτόν,<sup>39</sup> and so it is represented in the Choephoroi:

δι' αἷμα τ' ἐκποθὲν ὑπὸ χθονὸς τροφοῦ  
τίτας φόνος πέπηγεν οὐ διαρρύδαν.<sup>40</sup>  
πόροι τε πάντες ἐκ μιᾶς ὁδοῦ  
βαίνοντες τὸν  
χερομυστὴ φόνον καθαί-  
ροντες ἰοῦσαν μάταν.<sup>41</sup>

In view of these preparations (one might call them) in the antecedent action, the symbolism claimed above for the actual material stains which confront us in the robe scene is amply justified. The same correlated ideas are present: the persistence of the physical stain represents the fixedness of the queen's guilt, which all the streams of earth flowing in one

<sup>38</sup> Sept. 721-26.

<sup>39</sup> 1460.

<sup>40</sup> 64-65.

<sup>41</sup> 70-73; cf. 518-19

could not wash away. If this symbolism was part of our poet's purpose, and there is no reason to doubt it, we should look to find its logical completion in the appearance of the symbols; we should look to find the material stains declaring by their very aspect the enduring vitality of the moral stain. In other words, we should look to find them clearly and strongly outlined, not faded and dimmed with age. The improbability encountered by this supposition is not greater than that which actually confronts us in the opening scene of the *Eumenides*. Besides, it is not a question of what seems probable to us, but of what Aeschylus deemed dramatically desirable and at the same time dramatically possible. Rational men, as a rule, do not believe in ghosts, but ghosts are introduced on the tragic stage even today. As a dramatic device, the stalking spectre is not only incalculably effective, but he is invested with adequate poetic verisimilitude by virtue of the fact that the superstitious and ignorant accord him a real existence. The preservation of the blood-stains in much, or even all, of their original integrity would be defensible on exactly the same grounds. As a dramatic possibility, it would have been justified by popular belief; as an actuality, it would have greatly increased the dramatic effect of their exhibition by clarifying their symbolic meaning and materially adding to the spectacular effect. The imagination is almost prepared to conjure upon the robe stains of an actual crimson color when it recalls the picture of the suppliant at Delphi with the days-old blood still dank and dripping from his hands. The freshness of this blood typifies not only the freshness of the matricide's crime but also the malignant tenacity of the moral stain which he had incurred. On arriving in Athens both his hand and heart are clean; but, even thus, for the eyes of the hounding Furies, to whom he is still a criminal branded with the ineffaceable stain of mother-murder, he leaves a trail of clotted blood by which they track him. The very fact that Aeschylus could make such use of the physical stain of blood in the case of Orestes, strongly supports my thesis that he made an analogous use of



it in the case of Clytemnestra. I do not mean to claim that the stains upon the robe were actually blood-colored; my only contention is that they were clearly and strongly defined, and that the purpose of the lines before us was to call attention to this fact.

## 2.

*Cho.* 381-54,

Ζεῦ, Ζεῦ κάτωθεν ἀμπέμπων  
ὑστερόποινον ἄταν  
βροτῶν τλάμονι καὶ πανούργῳ  
χειρί, τοκεῦσι δ' ὅμως τελεῖται.

"O Zeus! O Zeus! who sendest from below  
A woe of tardy doom  
Upon the bold and subtle hands of men....  
Nay, though they parents be,  
Yet all shall be fulfilled.

—*Plumptre.*

The scholiast rightly explains τῇ χειρὶ Κλυταιμῆστρας καὶ Αἰγίσθου, although the former, as is shown by τοκεῦσι, is uppermost in Orestes' mind. In the *Agamemnon* the Atreidae are likened to vultures robbed of their young. In answer to their cries the God "on high"

ὑστερόποινον  
πέμπει παραβᾶσιν Ἐρινύν.  
οὕτω δ' Ἀτρέως παῖδας ὁ κρείσσειν  
ἐπ' Ἀλεξάνδρῳ πέμπει ξένιος  
Ζεύς . . .<sup>42</sup>

"Sendeth forth on men transgressing,  
Erinnys, slow but sure avenger;  
So against young Alexandros,  
Atreus' sons the great King sendeth.

Ὑστερόποινος in this passage is specifically colored. However indefinite and elastic the first part of the compound—ὑστερος—may ordinarily be, it is here defined in scope in so far as the second component enforces by direct implication a specific punishment. The chorus use the simile of the vultures merely as a means of describing the Atreidae in their attitude to—

<sup>42</sup> 58 ff.

ward the injuries they had sustained. The vengeance inflicted on the transgressors who had wronged the birds typifies the vengeance which those who had wronged the Atreidae were to suffer. Now with regard to this vengeance the elders had two definite bits of information and only two. They had foreknowledge through the prophecies of Calchas that it was certain to come to pass and further that it would be long delayed (*χρόνῳ μὲν ἀργεῖ κτλ.*).<sup>43a</sup> They lay special emphasis upon the latter fact at the beginning of the parodos (*δίκαιον μὲν ἔτος κτλ.*)<sup>43b</sup> and return to it more than once in the subsequent action. It is just this particular that *ὑστερο-* gives prominence to. The compound is not a general (and, it should be observed, superfluous) characterization of the avenging spirit, but a specific description of the vengeance which "*in the course of time*" was to fall upon Paris and his associates. The simple *ὑστερος* combines, in some degree at least, the functions of both *after* and *later* in English. At any rate, it often acquired the sense of *late*, and it is this idiomatic color that appears in *ὑστερόποιον*. The indefinite "*after (later)-avenging*" is merged into the more definite "*late-avenging*." Plumptre seems to me to catch the full spirit of the word—" *slow but sure avenger*."

Returning now to the lines under consideration, I believe their wording was consciously influenced by those quoted from the *Agamemnon*. The sentiment in both cases is the same—the divine authorization of vengeance for wrong done. It should also be remembered that *ὑστερόποιος* was coined by Aeschylus and, so far as our knowledge goes, used by him only in these two instances. This fact alone would suggest a connection between the passages. This is further indicated by the close kinship of *ἄταν* and *Ἐρινύς*. They are practically synonyms, as the scholiast noted long ago. Moreover it is Zeus (*ὁ κρείσσειν Ζεὺς* — *Ζεῦ, Ζεῦ*) in either case who sends (*πέμπει* — *ἀμπέμπων*) the avenging spirit. Indeed, the congruity of thought is so perfect, the sameness of words so

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<sup>43a</sup> 131 ff.

<sup>43b</sup> 40 ff.

striking, that we may fairly pronounce the one passage a conscious reminiscence of the other. The poet's mind would seem to have been running on the parallel of the Trojan vengeance. Further on in the play, as we have seen, he likens the punishment of the usurpers to that which befell Priam's sons, and the motive of comparison we found in a stay of execution common to both. Why may not *ὑστερόποιον* institute in a shadowy way the same parallel? At any rate, it involves the notion of tardy punishment in the Agamemnon and no less definite connotation would seem to be applicable or possible here. Orestes' meaning is this: "O Zeus! Zeus! thou who sendest from below, *however late*, unfailing doom on the bold and impious hand. . . . Even though they be parents, it must still be brought to pass."<sup>4</sup>

## 3.

*Cho.* 644-48,

προχαλκεύει δ' Αἴσα φασγανουργός·  
τέκνον δ' ἐπεισφέρει δίμασε  
αἰμάτων παλαιτέρων  
τίνει μύσος  
χρόνῳ κλυτῇ βυσσόφρων Ἐρινύς.

The whole tenor of this corrupt passage is in full accord with the traditional conception of the time-interval between the *Agamemnon* and the *Choephoroi*. Despite the fact that no safe

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<sup>4</sup> "τοκεῦσι δὲ . . . τελεῖται. The meaning of this is undoubtedly, as explained by Merkel, that deferred punishment (*ὑστερόποιον*) is paid like a debt with interest (*τόκος*). All other explanations (as that *τοκεῦσι* is contrasted with *παῖσι*, v. 378; Conington) are forced and unnatural."—*Verrall*. This interpretation would greatly strengthen my case, but it does not seem as natural as that given above. "Instead of finishing as we expect, 'send down upon the guilty mother,' she [i. e. Electra] breaks off, as it were with a sudden shrinking from the direct imprecation, and softens it into a prophecy—'but on her, mother though she be, yet vengeance draws nigh.' *ὁμῶς* is used idiomatically and elliptically; the full thought would be *καίπερ τοκεῦσιν οὖν ὁμῶς τελεῖται*."—*Sidgwick*.

argument can be drawn from them, *παλαιτέρων* and *χρόνῳ* leave us under a persistent impression that the culminating vengeance which was to wipe out the stain of former bloodshed was widely separated in time from the particular case of bloodshed that occasioned it.

*Cho.* 798-801,

κλύετε σύμφρονες θεοί·  
 ἄγετε, τῶν πάλαι πεπραγμένων  
 λύσαισθ' αἷμα προσφάτοις δίκαις.  
 γέρων φόνος μηκέτ' ἐν δόμοις τέκοι.

The same is true here. The scholiast explains γέρων φόνος as referring to Ἀγαμέμνονος παλαιὸς φόνος. This is, of course, wrong, but in the lines preceding the idea is distinctly conveyed that the murder *was* παλαιός and nothing short of παλαιός.

*Cho.* 740-42,

ὥς μοι τὰ μὲν παλαιὰ συγκεκραμένα  
 ἄλγη δύσοιστα τοῖσδ' ἐν Ἀτρέως δόμοις  
 τυχόντ' ἐμὴν ἤλγυνεν ἐν στέρνοις φρένα,  
 ἀλλ' οὔτι πῶ τοιόνδε πῆμ' ἀνεσχόμην·  
 τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλα τλημόνως ἦντλον κακά,  
 φίλον δ' Ὀρέστην . . . .

According to the scholiast 'the old sorrows' of the nurse were the butchery of Thyestes' children and the death of Agamemnon. Wecklein very properly observes "An das letztere ist mehr zu denken." Professor Seymour thinks that these words "in the mouth of the old nurse are not to be restricted in reference to the single sorrow for the death of Agamemnon." There were to be sure other sorrows, particularly the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, that she might have felt and that deeply, but we cannot escape the feeling that her keenest and most insistent grief must have been occasioned by the murder of her royal master and the downfall of the house and family to which her heart and life were bound with all the intensity of a slave-woman's pride and affection. In any case, her words are inconsistent with the thesis that this grief was less than a week old.

They rather convey the notion that she had got well beyond its influence. "The *old-time* sorrows.....were grievous to my inmost heart. But *never yet* have I had such sorrow as this to bear. The other misfortunes by dint of *enduring patience I threw off*, but this etc." The untranslatable *ἡτλουν* naturally implies that she had successively overcome each and every one of her past sorrows — even that for the crowning misfortune of the king's death. She does not speak as one who is still under the shadow of a terrible calamity.

No satisfactory positive evidence can be got from any one of these passages, but negatively considered they are, it seems to me, distinctly hostile to Professor Seymour's contention. In every one of them we find a comprehensive allusion to several acts of bloodshed that had taken place in the house of the Atreidae. These were certainly the butchery of the children and the murder of Agamemnon; the hieratic murder of Iphigeneia may also have been included in the reference, but the importance attached to it was altogether secondary. Now, when it is borne in mind that the last-mentioned occurrence was more than a decade removed and that the first was twice as far back in the past, what are we to infer as to the remoteness of the second when we find them collectively described as τὰ παλαιὰ ἔλγῃ, παλαιότερα αἵματα and τὰ πάλαι πεπραγμένα? The logical inference is unquestionable. The occurrences with which it is classed justified fully the description given; hence we should naturally conclude that the murder of the king also belonged to the *distant* past and equally justified the description given. In other words, I insist that the categories employed are eminently unnatural, if we must think of the murder as only a few days old. If it were an unessential or even a secondary item in the allusion, the language in which the allusion is clothed would be more defensible; but, when we consider the fact that this particular crime was uppermost in the minds of the chorus and the nurse, it is strange and misleading. Furthermore, if our poet's intention was to discard the old conception of the time that elapsed between the death of Agamemnon and the re-

turn of Orestes, and substitute for it a new reckoning of the interval, he signally defeated his own ends. The public for whom he was writing were already possessed of very definite notions with regard to the extent of this interval; they had been taught by the older poets to think of it as one of many years, and, so far as we know, no other conception had ever obtained. Added to this, Aeschylus himself nowhere plainly and outspokenly repudiates the traditional chronology of the story. In view of these facts, the reference to the king's murder contained in τὰ παλαιὰ ἔλγῃ κτέ. could have borne but one meaning to our poet's hearers; they must have been regarded as express indications of his acceptance of the established interval of years. Yet Professor Seymour would have us believe that he flaunted tradition and reduced this interval to one of days. In making this change he was actuated, it is supposed, solely by dramatic considerations. "The action of the Oresteia loses nothing, while it gains in energy and distinctness, if we think of it as condensed into a few days." But why did the poet lapse into ambiguity and thereby destroy the very conception of time that he wished to establish? Why did he not enforce this conception? It seems to me inconceivable that any playwright would for the sake of his action gratuitously fabricate a time-interval of less than a week and yet in the course of this action represent it repeatedly as an interval of years.

## 4.

*Cho.* 952-55,

τάπερ ὁ Λοξίας ὁ Παρνάσσιος  
 μέγαν ἔχων μυχὸν χθονὸς ἐπ' ὄχθῃ  
 ἄξεν ἀδόλως δολίως  
 βλαπτομέναν ἐν χρόνοις θέωσαν ἐποίχεται.

These lines are textually hopeless and their general sense seems hardly as clear as has been commonly supposed. However, I feel justified in citing them here by reason of the scholia on line 954, which are as follows: τὴν Κλυταιμῆστραν τὴν δολίως βλάπτουσιν καὶ ἐπὶ πολλὸν χρόνον τὸν οἶκον ἐποίχεται ἢ δίκη — ἐπεξήλ-

θε τὴν δίκην βλαπτομένην ἐκ πολλοῦ Ὀρέστης. The meaning is apparently this: "Upon Clytemnestra, who through guileful practice has been injuring the house *and that too for a long time*, there has come righteous retribution." — "Retribution, though long thwarted, was *at last* brought to pass by Orestes." It should be noted that, although these explanations differ widely in their treatment of βλαπτομένην (or whatever may have stood in its place), they agree perfectly in one particular. From the standpoint of either, justice had been not only *delayed* but *long delayed* (ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον — ἐκ πολλοῦ). Where did this notion come from? It was surely not a gratuitous interpolation; it must have proceeded from something in the text upon which these old interpretations were based. The first comment bears every mark of an expanded translation. If we strike out Κλυταιμήστραν, τὸν οἶκον and ἡ δίκη as explanatory additions, δολίως, βλάπτουσιν, ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον and ἐποίχεται correspond exactly to δολίως, βλαπτομένην, ἐν χρόνῳ θέσαν and ἐποίχεται of our text. The very emphasis given to ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον by its position and by the καί preceding marks it as an essential item in the meaning of the original. Indeed, it seems certain that the somebody or somebodies from whom these scholia emanated found after βλαπτομένην some word or phrase that could be translated by ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον or ἐκ πολλοῦ χρόνου. It seems certain also that Aeschylus could not have written ἐν χρόνῳ θέσαν. Some sense, at least, could be extracted from the scholia-text; none whatever can be got from ours. In view of these certainties, it is safe to conclude that our scholia-tradition is probably nearer to what Aeschylus actually wrote than our text-tradition. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that the scholia help us to the true reading time and again<sup>45</sup> in the *Choephoroi*. And such may well be the case here. At any rate, Bothe's restoration of ἐγγροισθέσαν is the most plausible explanation of ἐν χρόνῳ θέσαν that has been proposed.

The untrustworthiness of the Medicean scholia may be

<sup>45</sup> 155, 250, 261, 417, 422, 437, 472, 530, 534, 540, 646, 671, 878, 987. See Sidgwick, *Choephoroi*, Ap. IV p. 127.

granted, but we are not entitled because of this fact to ignore them. In the present instance, particularly, they are of unusual importance, for they shed the only external light we possess on a difficult and mutilated passage. The comments on line 954 may, of course, be altogether misleading; our poet may not have intended to say that Clytemnestra's punishment was long delayed or anything to this effect. But the balance of probability tends strongly to the opposite conclusion. The passage, I think, must stand as thoroughly valid second-hand evidence in support of the long-interval hypothesis.

IV. Indications unfavorable to the assumption of a brief interval.

1.

*Cho.* 268 ff.<sup>46</sup>

The short-interval theory would make it necessary to suppose that Orestes made up his mind to the murder of his mother without any appreciable delay. The ascertainable facts in the case are strongly against this. The matricidal scheme of vengeance was not a project independently conceived and voluntarily entered upon by Orestes; it originated entirely with Apollo. Moreover, it was not a divine suggestion, but a divine command. And added to this it was not a command freely and willingly accepted; it was one which Orestes was compelled to obey. The spirit in which he received it can be confidently inferred from the policy of last resort which Apollo adopted in dealing with him. The fact of the god's threatening his emissary with a long list of peculiarly hideous penalties as the price of disobedience shows that his simple word of command was not enough; it implies furthermore that argument and persuasion had proved unavailing in the attainment of his ends. He resorted to methods of intimidation because it was the only recourse left him. The situation presented forces the conclusion that he had encountered serious difficulty in bringing Orestes to the point of obedience. We must suppose that the latter had

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Cho.* 1026 ff.; *Eum.* 84, 199 f., 469, 596 ff.



either shown himself openly rebellious or had irritated the god by indecision and delay. The circumstances forbid any other conception of his attitude. It is plainly out of the question to suppose that he yielded a ready and unhesitating compliance to the god's wishes. It not only involves the incongruous supposition that a man whose moral bias was strongly in the direction of righteousness and whose filial instincts were markedly pious could bring himself all in a moment and in cold blood to the revolting impiety of matricide, but it is thoroughly out of keeping with Orestes' actual attitude toward the murder of his mother. His aversion to the deed is abundantly proved by the fact that he had to be forced to it, by the delirium of misery and madness into which he is plunged after the murder, and by the pathetic irresolution which he evinces when brought face to face with its execution. Even in the act of striking his courage gives way and he must be nerved to his horrible duty afresh—and how? By the warning voice of Apollo speaking through the lips of Pylades. I wish to emphasize these last words. Professor Verrall has shown,<sup>41</sup> conclusively I think, that Pylades' sole function in the play is as the deputy of Apollo, or, as he excellently puts it, "the living embodiment of the divine command." The dramatic part that he plays, or rather his lack of part, is hardly intelligible on any other assumption. His presence must be thought of as in a certain sense the outcome of divine precaution. It was thus that the god safeguarded the execution of his purpose. He provided against the possibility of failure by never allowing his emissary to lose sight of his injunctions. If I am right in this view, and it seems difficult to avoid it, it leads us to the unavoidable conclusion that Apollo was not sure of Orestes. And we are further fortified in this conviction by his initial attitude. He could hardly be expected to be otherwise than distrustful of a resolution which had to be evoked by the goad of terror.

In short, every tangible presumption—the policy of intimidation adopted by Apollo, his distrust of his emissary and the

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<sup>41</sup> *The 'Choephori'*: Introduction, p. XVII ff.

precaution to which it led, the character of Orestes, his reluctance to the murder and the after effect which it had upon him — militates against the thesis that Orestes' matricidal resolve was speedily arrived at, and favors the counter-thesis that it was reached only after a prolonged moral conflict. The exact manner in which the divine command was conveyed cannot be determined, but it is extremely probable that Aeschylus thought of it as many times repeated. Orestes' detailed account of the oracular utterances is better understood in this light. It is altogether unlikely that the god betook himself immediately to methods of intimidation, while the number and variety of his threats give rise to the feeling that they were not all delivered at one and the same interview. Our poet tells us that Laius was thrice<sup>48</sup> warned against the consequences of fatherhood, and there is not the slightest reason why he should not have assumed that the command laid upon Orestes was repeated. It may be that he intended to make this clear in line 270 (*καξορθιάζων πολλά*).

## 2.

*Cho.* 234-36,

ὦ φίλτατον μέλημα δώμασιν πατρός,  
δακρυτὸς ἐλπίς σπέρματος σωτηρίου,  
ἀλκῇ πεποιθὼς δῶμ' ἀνακτήσῃ πατρός.

These lines must be given either to Electra (as commonly) or to the chorus (Rossbach, followed by Weil and Wecklein). The manuscript assignment to Orestes is clearly wrong. What notion did Aeschylus mean to convey by *δακρυτὸς ἐλπίς*? The answer of our annotators and translators is singularly unanimous. "He was looked for with tears; he was the only hope of the house, both as the one son of Agamemnon and as its deliverer and avenger; and all this is given in this powerful line in four words, '*Thou long-wept hope, heir and deliverer.*'" —Sidgwick; "*Its* [i. e. the house's] *long-wept hope of seed to*

<sup>48</sup> *Sept.* 731.

*continue it.*"—VERRALL; "*Beweinte (d. h. unter Thränen ersehnte) Hoffnung.*"—WECKLEIN; "*Tu aedibus carissime, quem diu salutem allaturum esse speravimus.*"—KLAUSEN; "*O saepe jam defleta spes, generis paterni sospicatrix.*"—SCHUETZ; "*O long lamented hope of a stock that should prove its deliverer (or, which should perpetuate the family).*"—PALEY; "*Our one sole hope, bewept with many a tear, Of issue that shall work deliverance.*"—PLUMPTRE; "*Hope of our race, thou precious seed long wept.*"—SWANWICK; "*Beweinte Hoffnung süßes Rettungslichtes du!*"—MINCKWITZ.

The two-fold force of *ἐλπίς* seems unquestionable. Orestes was the sole hope of the house's perpetuation and at the same time the sole hope of its deliverance from existing conditions. The addition of *δακνυρός* plainly implies that the home-coming of the deliverer had been expected in the past and that the expectation had been in vain; the tears shed were tears of disappointment. The word is meaningless on the supposition that Orestes returned to Argos immediately, before the most unreasoning impatience would have time to despair of his coming. The only rational conclusion to be drawn from the lines is that he did not return immediately.

## 3.

*Cho.* 300,

*καὶ πρὸς πίεσι χρημάτων ἀχηνία,*

Orestes justifies his matricidal resolve on four distinct grounds: he is impelled to it by the divine command, by grief for his father, by promptings of patriotism, and "*besides there is the press of penury.*" Are we to suppose that this urgent poverty arose suddenly in less than a week's time? Or are we to assume that Orestes was an object of charity in the house of his Phocian guardian? One or the other alternative is imperative to Professor Seymour's thesis. Neither seems to me for a moment tenable.

The exact relation which Strophius sustained to his ward is shrouded in mystery, but it is out of the question to assume

that the child was not properly provided for up to the time of his father's death. If Clytemnestra had left her son in want, she would not only have run the serious risk of uncloaking her real designs in sending him from home, but she would have thereby provided a serious menace to the execution of her larger plans, particularly if he were much of a man during the last year of his absence, as Professor Seymour claims. There was nothing to prevent the exile, either through his own efforts or through the medium of friends like Pylades, from making trouble for the conspirators or even warning his father of suspected danger. It is perfectly clear, therefore, that the queen had nothing to lose, and everything to gain, in creating and scrupulously maintaining both at home and abroad the impression that Orestes had been transferred to the keeping of another solely as a precautionary measure for his own safety, in case Agamemnon died at Troy and the growing resentment of his subjects should turn with violence against his helpless son. Such being the case, it goes without saying that she made careful provision for his welfare in every particular. As for Strophius himself, every reasonable presumption favors the supposition that he was acting the part of a friend. In apologizing to her husband for Orestes' absence, Clytemnestra dwells on the fact that he is in the safe-keeping of an εἰμενὴς δορυφόρος and Agamemnon makes not the slightest demur to the characterization. This shows clearly enough that Strophius had been, and was at the time of the king's departure, a friend of the family and, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, the presumption is that he remained so. Furthermore, even if he had been disposed to maltreat the child, he would not have dared to do so as long as Agamemnon remained alive. It would have brought him nothing but the certain enmity, if not the avenging wrath, of the most powerful king of the Greek world. In short, every shred of evidence, every logical presumption, is against the thesis that Orestes was in pecuniary want before his father's death. As long as his father was in a position to defend himself and punish his enemies,

the obvious self-interest of both Clytemnestra and Strophius demanded that the exile should remain, both in his own eyes and the eyes of the world, the heir apparent to the Argive throne and the wealth of his family; and, as such, he cannot be thought of as in any sense impecunious.

The real cause and beginning of his poverty is clearly indicated in line 135 *ff.*:

ἐκ δὲ χρημάτων  
φείγων Ὀρέστης ἐστίν, οἳ δ' ὑπερκόπως  
ἐν τοῖσι σοῖς πόνουσι χλίουσιν μέγα.

The conspirators had not only murdered the father, but they had robbed the son of his rightful inheritance. Up to the very moment of the murder Orestes was rich in the mere prospect of riches, but from that time on he was not only poor, but penniless. He was, to be sure, among friends and in no danger of actual want, but the condition in which he found himself was naturally repugnant and certain to grow more and more irksome as time went on. According to Professor Seymour's thesis, he returned to Argos immediately and in less than a week had carried out the vengeance enjoined upon him by Apollo. If this is true, the penury of which he complains had not existed more than three or four days by the most liberal calculation. And yet we are asked to believe that this eminently righteous-minded man, who is elsewhere represented as strikingly free from any taint of self-seeking, had brooded himself during this short period of time into a fictitious sense of immediate and distressing poverty; we are asked to think of a loyal son on the very threshold of a sudden and terrible bereavement as a sordid self-seeker grieving less for the loss of his father than for the loss of his father's property. Added to this, we find him urging his impecunious condition — a newly-arisen condition be it observed, which had as yet brought upon him not a single hardship — as a serious excuse for committing a crime against which his whole nature rose up in rebellion. The situation thus produced may be defended, but it seems to me little short of absurd; it is wholly inconsonant with the character

of Orestes as Aeschylus has elsewhere drawn him. On the other hand, if we suppose that the poignancy of the exile's grief had worn away, if we suppose that he had had time to reflect on his immediate personal wrongs and that he had been slowly driven into a stinging sense of his resourceless condition under the stress of actual experience, or, in other words, that his lack of resources had grown so serious as to justify in some degree the least acceptable of all remedies, the situation becomes thoroughly natural and intelligible. Indeed, it is only on this supposition that *πιέζει* adequately explains itself. It is not simple penury, but *urgent, goading* penury that impels Orestes. The strong language which he uses implies that he had passed through a period of cumulative want much more extended than the interval allowed by Professor Seymour. It is rather to be thought of as an interval of months, or even years, than as one of days.

## 4.

Ag. 868-876,

ἐκ τῶνδ' ἐτοι παῖς ἐνθάδ' οὐ παραστατεῖ  
 ἐμῶν τε καὶ σῶν κύριος πιστωμάτων,  
 ὡς χρεὴν, Ὀρέστης· μηδὲ θαυμάσης τόδε.  
 τρέφει γὰρ αὐτὸ εὐμενὴς δορύξενος  
 Στροφίος ὁ Φωκεὺς, ἀμφιλεκτά πῆματα  
 ἐμοὶ προφωνῶν, τὸν θ' ὑπ' Ἰλίου σέθεν  
 κίνδυνον, εἴ τε δημόθρους ἀναρχία  
 βουλὴν καταρρίψειεν, ὥστε σύγγονον  
 βροτοῖσι τὸν πεσόντα λακτίσαι πλέον.

The context would lead us to infer that the reason assigned for Orestes' removal held good up to the very moment of Agamemnon's triumph. 'His absence is due to the fact that he was in danger here.' *Τρέφει* would naturally imply that he was still a *child* who had to be cared for and protected. It cannot mean that Strophius was merely supporting him.

## 5.

Cho. 246-53,

ἰδοῦ δὲ γένναν εὖνιν αἰετοῦ πατρός,  
 θανόντος ἐν πλεκταῖσι καὶ σπειράμασιν  
 δεινῆς ἐχίδνης. τοὺς δ' ἀπωρφανισμένους  
 νῆστις πιέζει λιμός· οὐ γὰρ ἐντελὴς  
 θήραν πατρῶαν προσφέρειν σκηνήμασιν.  
 οὕτω δὲ κάμει τήνδε τ', Ἠλέκτραν λέγω,  
 ἰδεῖν πάρεστί σοι, πατροστερῇ γόνον,  
 ἄμφω φυγὴν ἔχοντε τὴν ἑτὴν δόμων.

This metaphor-simile seems to me forced and unnatural, if we must think of Orestes as already in the full strength of manhood at the moment of his father's death. It should be noted that the children are not merely compared with the eagle-brood, but completely identified with them (*ἰδοῦ δὲ γένναν εὖνιν* κτλ., not, as would be expected, *ἰδοῦ ἡμᾶς ὡς γένναν* κτλ.). Furthermore, the young eagles as such are represented as physically helpless; the fact is emphasized and re-emphasized. They are still nestlings; they are stricken with hunger and without means of averting it; they are not strong enough to go abroad and bring in the food their murdered sire was wont to provide for them. Are we to suppose that this accentuated circumstance of physical immaturity had no bearing whatever on the case of the children? Does it not naturally lead to the conclusion that Orestes, at least, was a helpless child when orphanage came upon him? In what way was his condition analogous to that of the impotent birds, if at the time mentioned he was really possessed of such strength and assurance as to give immediate battle to the murderous viper in whose coils his father had perished and, what is more to the point, destroy it? The only way out of the difficulty is to assume that the parallel of likeness in our poet's mind lay only between the physical weakness of the orphaned birds on the one hand and the purely circumstantial weakness of the orphaned children on the other, and that it did not extend to age conditions at all. The children were not only orphans, but exiles and paupers. They

naturally felt themselves weak in the perilous struggle they were undertaking against the powerful usurpers. This explanation is defensible, but the fuller and more literal parallel seems to me much more in keeping with our poet's language. Orestes is thinking of the past as well as the present. He mentally retraces the course of his adolescence until he reaches the point of his father's death, when he was in reality *οὐκ ἐντελής*—a child in strength and in years.

## 6.

*Cho.* 259–62,

οὐτ' ἀρχικός σοι πᾶς ὃδ' αἰανθείς πυθμὴν  
βωμοῖς ἀρήξει βουθύτους ἐν ἡμασιν.  
κόμζ', ἀπὸ σμικροῦ δ' ἂν ἀρεῖας μέγαν  
δόμον, δοκοῦντα κάρτα νῦν πεπτωκέναι.

Mark the significant *πᾶς* in the first line; "If you permit this royal stock to wither *wholly* away —." The image is that of a blighted tree or vine, whose vitality is in large part gone, though not entirely. It still retains a modicum of life. This is evinced by the explanatory lines that follow: *κόμζ'* (*Cherish it*), *ἀπὸ σμικροῦ κτλ.* (*and from this tiny spark of life thou canst restore to greatness, etc.*). The process of destruction implied is one of gradual devitalization; the once luxuriant growth had sickened and slowly rotted away until its life was almost extinct. The blighting cause was, of course, the death of Agamemnon; the means by which its ebbing vitality was to be resuscitated and its former vigor restored was the deliverance soon to be wrought by Orestes. The figurative notion conveyed of the period intervening between these occurrences is one of months or years rather than weeks or days.

## 7.

There are several bits of circumstantial evidence scattered through the *Choephori* which point to a settled condition at Argos. The changed current of affairs would seem to have



reached a steadier flow than would be natural or possible only a few days after the upheaval incident upon the king's death. The general complexion is that of a thoroughly established scheme of life.

The contrast<sup>49</sup> between the new regime and the old—between the *σέβας* with which Agamemnon was popularly regarded and the *φόβος* inspired by the usurpers—presupposes a period of re-adjustment and reconstruction. It implies a well-defined experience of new conditions.

The tyrants are living in lavish wantonness and squandering the wealth accumulated by the dead king.<sup>50</sup>

By their death the Argive state is freed from the thrall of two serpents.<sup>51</sup> The comparison is peculiarly suggestive of long-continued depredation.

Electra's condition is that of a *slave*<sup>52</sup> and, like Orestes, she is an *exile*<sup>53</sup> so far as her rights and liberties are concerned.

## 8.

*Cho.* 22-26,

ιαλτὸς ἐκ δόμων ἔβην  
 χοὺς προπομπὸς ἐξύχει σὺν κόπῳ.  
 πρέπει παρὴς φοίνισσ' ἀμυγμοῖς  
 ὄνυχος ἄλοκι νεοτόμῳ.  
 (δι' αἰῶνος δ' ἱγμοῖσι βόσκεται κέαρ).

"δι'—*κέαρ* is a parenthetic remark attached to *νεοτόμῳ*, to which word *δι' αἰῶνος* stands in antithesis; 'The external signs of grief are new, though the inner and secret feeling (see *v.* 80) has been there all along.' So in *Sept.* 730 the clause *αἰῶνα δ' ἐς τρίτον* stands in antithesis to *ὠκύποινον*." (Wecklein, translated by Verrall.) If this explanation is right, and it seems almost beyond doubt, one is compelled to think of "the inner and secret" grief of the chorus as having endured for many a day.

<sup>49</sup> 53-58.

<sup>50</sup> 136-37, 941-42. Cf. *Ag.* 1638-39.

<sup>51</sup> 1044-45.

<sup>52</sup> 135.

<sup>53</sup> 132, 253, 336, 406.

The description given is not suited to a feeling that has just laid hold upon the heart; it rather suggests a haunting, irrepressible sorrow that has long existed. It may be contended that the reference is general, and that the old slave-women are thinking of other sorrows along with that immediately before them. The context is against this. The outward signs of grief were assumed in honor of the dead king and we naturally conclude that the inward expressions with which they are contrasted were due to the same cause. This conclusion is borne out by line 80ff.:

δακρύν' δ' ὑφ' εἰμάτων  
ματαίοισι δεσπόταν  
τύχαις, κρυφαίοις πένθεσιν παχυνουμένη.

## 9.

*Cho.* 200-203,

ἀλλ' εἰδότες μὲν τοὺς θεοὺς καλούμεθα,  
οἴοισιν ἐν χειμῶσι ναυτίλων δίκην  
στροβούμεθ'. εἰ δὲ χρή τυχὲν σωτηρίας,  
συμκροῦ γένοιτ' ἂν σπέρματος μέγας πυθμῆν.

Does not the last sentence distinctly imply that Electra's hopes of deliverance had been reduced to a minimum? Compare her appeal in lines 393-398:

καὶ πότ' ἂν ἀμφιβαλῆς  
Ζεὺς ἐπὶ χεῖρα βάλοι,  
φεῦ, φεῦ, κάρανα δαίξας·  
πιστὰ γένοιτο χώρα.  
δίκαν δ' ἐξ ἀδίκων ἀπαιτῶ.  
κλύτε δὲ Γᾶ χθονίων τε τίμαι.

The marked impatience of the question betokens a protest against continued delay.

Equally suggestive are the words of the chorus to the old nurse in line 77: ἀλλ' εἰ τροπαίαν Ζεὺς κακῶν θήσει ποτέ. Zeus was at last<sup>54</sup> on the point of changing 'the weather of their distress'

<sup>54</sup> For this use of *poré* compare *Prom.* 1031; *Eur. Hel.* 855, 896; *Rhes.* 475 and *El.* 77: ὦ θεοί, Δίκη τε πάνθ' ὁρῶσ', ἥλθές ποτε.

(to use Professor Verrall's phrase) from foul to fair. The prayer with which they inaugurate the *commos* is conceived in the same spirit of reawakened hope:

ἀλλ' ὃ μεγάλοι Μοῖραι, Διόθεν  
τῇδε τελευτᾶν,  
ἢ τὸ δίκαιον μεταβαίνει.<sup>55</sup>

'Grant that it may all *end* here, now that justice is (at last) coming over to our side.' Τελευτᾶν leads us to suppose that justice had been *long* in turning.

## 10.

*Eum.* 106-109,

ἢ πολλὰ μὲν δὴ τῶν ἐμῶν ἐλείξατε,  
χοάς τ' αἰόνοιν, νηφάλια μελίγματα,  
καὶ νυκτίσμενα δαῖπν' ἐπ' ἐσχάρῃ πυρὸς  
ἔθουσιν, ἄραν οὐδενὸς κοινῇν θεῶν

"List, ye who drank so oft with lapping tongue  
The wineless draught by me outpoured to soothe  
Your vengeful ire! how oft on kindled shrine  
I laid the feast of darkness, at the hour  
Abhorred of every god but you alone!  
Lo, all my service trampled down and scorned!"

—*Morshead.*

Πολλά, standing as it does in an emphatic position and reinforced by the idea of repetition in ἔθουσιν, points to a large number of separate services. Are we to suppose that these numerous propitiations took place in a single week and that the offerings were systematically repeated night after night? It is far more probable that they were regulated purely by circumstances and separated by varying intervals. They were precautionary measures on the queen's part intended to avert an ever-present danger; and, as such, one thinks of them as the flood-marks, so to speak, of her recurrent anxiety, not as observances performed at regular intervals. At any rate, the passage is distinctly unfavorable to Professor Seymour's thesis.

<sup>55</sup> 305-7.

## THE ARGUMENTS OF THE SHORT-INTERVAL THEORY.

## 1.

I will now pass to the negative side of the question. Professor Seymour directs attention to the fact that "the *Choephori* does not contain the indications abundant in the *Electra* of the lapse of time since the death of Agamemnon." This he considers a presumption against the long-interval hypothesis; "Sophocles evidently followed the Homeric story that Orestes returned after eight years. He represents Electra as losing all hope because of the procrastination of Orestes (*El.* 164 f., 303 ff.). He says that he will come, but does naught of what he promises. Clytemnestra too has long (*αἰὲν* 782) expected the return of her son to render vengeance; the dread of this has kept sleep from her eyes. But in the *Choephori*, Orestes is not yet the declared enemy of the guilty pair. On receiving the false news of Orestes' death, Aegisthus expresses regret (833 ff.) which bears no mark of hypocrisy, and clearly does not look to be slain by his hands. Perhaps he does not think that Orestes has yet heard of Agamemnon's death. The Aeschylean *Electra* is so far from resting all her hope on her brother that she actually needs to be reminded of him by the coryphaeus (108)."

The paucity of the indications in the *Choephori* seems to me sufficiently accounted for by the fact that it is not an isolated play, like the *Electra*, but a dependent part of a larger whole. The dramatic problem which confronted Sophocles was simple as compared with the more complicated problem that Aeschylus had to deal with. The former was foot-loose with regard to the antecedents of his action; he could make them whatever he chose. He was not hampered by the necessity of dramatizing the murder of Agamemnon as the first act of a larger drama of which the *Electra* was to be the second. Aeschylus, on the other hand, was bound by his trilogistic purpose and his conceptions of dramatic unity to create a certain appearance of continuity between the

action of the *Choephoroi* and that which preceded it. In other words, in passing dramatically from the tragedy of Agamemnon's death to the punishment of his murderers, he felt it necessary to suppress the long period of time by which these events were historically separated. How successfully he has done this hardly needs to be told. In the *Agamemnon* he obscures the accepted chronology of the story and leaves us under the vague impression that retribution is already hovering over the guilty pair. He keeps up the illusion of speedy vengeance in the opening action of the *Choephoroi* by leading us straight from the chamber of death to the dead man's grave; our beguilement is completed by the presence of mourners whom we suppose to be mourning for one just buried. As the action progresses, the mist is gradually cleared away until, on reaching line 934, we realize that an actual period of years has elapsed since Agamemnon's death. A plan of this nature would necessarily entail a scarcity of time-indications, especially in the earlier parts of the play; as a matter of fact our first trustworthy allusion occurs in line 462.

In case this explanation seems insufficient or questionable, there still remains the marked dissimilarity of the two poets in their treatment of details. Of this there can be no doubt. In the words of Professor Sidgwick, Aeschylus is "a poet to whom certainly no one would attribute realistic detail." His whole attitude toward the minor particulars of his story may be summed up in a single sentence: He consistently ignores them unless they subserve in some way his dramatic purpose. He is the antipode of Euripides in this respect. He never enlightened merely for the sake of enlightening. He depended on the general information of his public and left it to fill in the gaps in his narrative from the current data of the story. Sophocles, on the other hand, habitually deferred to a reasonable curiosity on the part of his hearers; he rarely left anything to be inferred. He mastered the art of giving to minutiae an unobtrusive, and thereby a dramatic, importance as perhaps no dramatist has ever done.

A few illustrations will make clear this radical difference in the practice of the two poets. We are told in the *Choephoroi* that Electra's condition is that of a slave. We may infer from this that our poet is either describing her in metaphor or that he conceived her as actually performing the duties of a menial. Sophocles leaves us in no doubt whatever:

"I do my task unmeet,  
And tend the chambers where my father dwelt,  
In this unseemly guise,  
And stand at tables all too poorly filled." <sup>56</sup>

—*Plumptre*

Aeschylus gives us no hint as to the real cause of Artemis' anger against the Atreidae; in the *Electra* we find her resentment fully and clearly explained.<sup>57</sup> The Sophoclean Orestes tells us explicitly that he consulted the oracle at Delphi:<sup>58</sup> we do not know how the Aeschylean Orestes received his instructions; it is nowhere stated, nor even surely implied, that he voluntarily applied to Apollo for advice. Again, Aeschylus does not touch upon the manner of Orestes' reported death; Sophocles, on the other hand, elaborates this particular in one of the most persuasively realistic fictions to be found in literature. In the *Choephoroi* we learn nothing as to the exact abode of the Phocian Strophius; in the *Electra* we find him definitely located at Crisa.<sup>59</sup> In both plays Aegisthus is absent when Orestes enters the palace; the younger poet tells us where he is,<sup>60</sup> the older says nothing about it.

But it is needless to enforce further a palpable fact. The reader of Aeschylus is too often thrown upon his own resources to be reminded of his indifference in the matter of purely enlightening details. This indifference often amounts to positive neglect; as, for instance, in the case of the telegraphic beacons. How did it come that the Argive public remained for

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<sup>56</sup> *El.* 189-92.

<sup>57</sup> 566 ff.

<sup>58</sup> 32 ff.

<sup>59</sup> 180.

<sup>60</sup> 313.

a whole year in ignorance of their existence? Our curiosity is everywhere astir. Where did Aegisthus spend his exile? When did he return to Argos? When were the plans of the conspirators matured? When was Orestes sent from home? What was the exact history of the ὑφασμα? What were the precise antecedents of the libation-bearers? What became of Pylades at the close of the *Choephoroi*? What places did Orestes visit in the course of his wanderings? What seas did he cross? In view of these questions and many others which we ask ourselves in vain, it is hardly surprising if our poet does not help us to a realistic conception of the lapse of time between the death of Agamemnon and the home-coming of Orestes. But I think I have shown that the allusions which favor the long-interval hypothesis are more numerous and more definite than Professor Seymour allows. They are not so explicit as those in the *Electra*; but this is just what would be expected from the proved practice of the two poets.

## 2.

Professor Seymour finds a number of indications which he thinks tend to confirm his thesis that Orestes was already a man at the time of his father's death. "The evidence for this view is partly negative and partly positive. In the warning of Aegisthus by the chorus in the *Agamemnon* (1617, 1638), that Orestes may return and inflict vengeance on his father's murderers, no indication of youth is found as in the warning given by Hermes in Homer that Orestes would return when he should come to manhood (ὅπῳρ' ἂν ἡβήσῃ, α 41)." Any disclosure of Orestes' real age at his father's death would have destroyed in its very beginning the illusory continuity which our poet was in the act of establishing between the closing action of the *Agamemnon* and the opening action of the *Choephoroi*. If he intended to represent him as already arrived at the full strength of manhood, why did he stop at shadowy suggestion? Why did he allow his hearers to linger in the contrary belief

that he was still an immature boy? Why did he not tell them clearly that he was grown up and no longer a mere child as his predecessors had taught them to believe? The very fact that he does not positively contradict the traditional conception is a strong negative presumption that he adhered to it.

As further evidence, Professor Seymour endeavors to establish the corollary thesis that in Aeschylus Orestes was older than Sophocles represented him at the time of his removal into Phocis.

"In the *Electra* of Sophocles, Orestes is guided on his return by the faithful old pedagogue who had saved him; as Orestes says to his sister, οὐ τὸ Φωκίων πέδον ὑπεξεπέμφθην σῇ προμηθίᾳ χερσίν 1349f. The aged attendant points out to the son of Agamemnon Argos, the sanctuary of Io, the Lycean Agora, the renowned temple of Hera, Mycenae, and the home of the Pelopidae, ὅθεν σε πατὴρ ἐκ φόνων ἐγὼ ποτε | πρὸς σῆς ὀμαίμου καὶ κασιγνήτης λαβὼν | ἤνεγκα κἀξέσωσα κἀξεθραύαμην τόσονδ' ἐς ἡβης, 11 ff. A hint of the tender age of the Sophoclean Orestes when sent from home may be found in his mother's words about him, as μαστῶν ἀποστὰς καὶ τροφῆς ἐμῆς 776, which though exaggerated in any case are better suited to a boy of ten than to a youth of eighteen. In the *Choephori*, on the other hand, no attendant is said to have saved Orestes' life, and none accompanies him as his guide on his return. Electra had nothing to do with his departure. Orestes, of his own knowledge, is perfectly familiar with the locality. Nothing indicates that he has not seen his home since early childhood."

The fact that the Aeschylean Orestes is removed from home before his father's return can be easily accounted for without supposing that the poet thought of him as *too old* to be rescued. I shall presently contend that the Clytemnestra of Aeschylus was incapable of deliberate child-murder. If this is true, it constitutes the very best of reasons for his rejection of the story of the rescue. But there are other assignable reasons which seem to me hardly less cogent than this. If he had adopted the story as Sophocles did, he would have been forced



to sacrifice either in whole or part one of the most engrossing motifs of the *Agamemnon*. The mere circumstance of Orestes' presence in the palace would have proved a serious obstacle in the way of the luminous foreglimpse which he wished to give of the future vengeance. As long as the chosen agent of this vengeance remained within the power or in any wise within the reach of the murderers, in other words as long as effective measures could be taken against his life or against the possibility of his escape, any open revelation of the role he was destined to bear would have been strangely inconsonant with the most meagre requirements of dramatic probability. Cassandra's public and impassioned disclosure of the divine will would have been altogether impracticable and the vindictive warning of Aegisthus by the elders, which more than anything else prepares us for the coming of the avenger, would have been out of the question. In view of these difficulties, therefore, it is not surprising that Aeschylus discarded the story of the rescue. He had to remove Orestes before the sin was committed or else leave the retribution in undesirable darkness. Again, the story of the rescue, by showing up the tender age of Orestes, would have established at the very outset the lapse of years between the sin and the retribution which our poet desired to obscure. It would have made it impossible for him to bring about any semblance of continuity between the action of the *Agamemnon* and that of the *Choephoroi*. On the other hand, the story of the child's peaceful removal before the murder, by conveying no indication whatever of his age at the time of the murder, supplied him with the very means which he required for this purpose. It enabled him to dwell upon the coming vengeance without disclosing the fact that it was still far off in the future.

The use of a guide implies ignorance, to be sure, but many a man with a perilous mission before him has made his way without a guide and in safety to a destination of which he had no previous personal knowledge. So far as dramatic probability is concerned, Orestes would have stood in no essential need

of a guide, if he had come to Argos as an utter stranger; still less would he have required an attendant to show him the way, if he was returning to the place where he had passed the first ten years or more of his life. It would be rashly underrating the vitality of childish impressions to assume that he had quite forgotten the familiar scenes of his childhood. If these contentions are well grounded, and they seem to me irrefutable, the fact that Aeschylus represented Orestes as returning to Argos without a guide constitutes not the vaguest presumption that he thought of him as a youth well advanced toward manhood on his departure. The same line of reasoning would lead us to the conclusion that Euripides also meant to represent him as a youth well advanced toward manhood at the time mentioned, a conclusion which is manifestly absurd; for we know that in the story of Euripides Orestes was still a mere child at the time of his rescue just as he was in the story of Sophocles. As a matter of fact, Sophocles brought the attendant into his play not because he considered it necessary that Orestes should have a guide to point out to him the landmarks of his old home, but because he wished to provide him with a helper in the work of retribution. As a prudent man who was sure of the justice of his undertaking and who fully realized its peril, it was perfectly natural that the Sophoclean avenger should take every precaution; it was thoroughly consistent with his character that he should have some one to prepare the way for him in the palace. The Aeschylean avenger, on the other hand, was preoccupied with a moral conflict which left him small leisure for forethought; he was just the man to rush into danger half prepared. His recklessness comes out clearly, and with splendid dramatic effect, in the perilous insufficiency of the δόλος which he enacts. His mother is never more than half deceived by the story of his death, and the success of his mission hangs to the very last by a gossamer thread. The precarious situation thus produced was obviously an essential item in our poet's dramatic plan. His conception of Orestes not only did not call for, but expressly forbade the introduction

of a helper who should pave a way for him in the palace. Such being the case, why should he have introduced an attendant who would have been needless in the prologue and worse than useless in the play? As for the topographical explanations of the paedagogus, it seems to me that they must be regarded as essentially scenic explanations. As Sophocles intended them, they were meant to enlighten the spectators rather than Orestes. Whenever the action of his plays is inaugurated by strangers, or, in other words, whenever a commentative interest in their local surroundings is natural to those who sustain the introductory parts, he always explains the *mise en scène* with unusual detail. A comparison of the *Oedipus at Colonus* and the *Philoctetes* will make this clear. Furthermore, there is nothing in the attitude of Orestes himself to indicate that he was actually unfamiliar with the topography of Mycenae. He betrays no wonderment or surprise or even interest at the sight of the places which are pointed out to him. The fact that the paedagogus assumes that he is in need of enlightenment is no evidence that the poet thought of him as really ignorant of his surroundings. It was thoroughly natural that the old man should point out to his young master the landmarks of home which he had not seen since childhood and which, moreover, he had been 'constantly longing to behold,' but it is also natural that Orestes should have retained some remembrance of these landmarks. His ignorance is rather apparent than real. It is merely a convenient dramatic excuse for enlightening the spectators.

"But, for a positive argument, in Aeschylus Orestes is an *exile*. In this respect the difference is marked between the representations of Aeschylus and Sophocles. In the latter's play, Orestes has deserted his home of his own will, rescued from death by his sister, and sent away secretly. In the Aeschylean trilogy he was driven from home by his mother. When, under his reproaches, Clytemnestra says he should not declare that he was cast out — she had sent him to the home of an ally — he insists that he was 'sold, though the son of a free father.'

When the mother asks what price she had received for him, he declares that he is ashamed to name it openly. In her stichomythic reply she bids him consider also his father's wantonness,—*καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ σοῦ μάτας* (*Choeph.* 906-911). What Orestes means by the price received for him, is clear; he was sent from home because he was too old a youth to endure the sight of the intimacy between Aegisthus and his mother. His sisters, being women, were helpless, but the young man would not have brooked the sight of his mother's shame and the wrong to his father. Such an age for Orestes is assumed also in the *Agamemnon*, 841 ff., where the queen apologizes for her son's absence; if he were only a ten-year-old boy, she need not have mentioned his absence, any more than that of his sisters, in her speech of welcome to her husband. That passage shows sufficiently that Orestes was no child to be saved by his sister; his mother says he was already in Phocis. That Orestes was considered an exile is indicated elsewhere in the *Choephori*, and also in the opening lines, where he says, *ἤκω γὰρ ἐς γῆν τήνδε καὶ κατέρχομαι*, explained correctly by Aristophanes' words in the mouth of Aeschylus, *Frogs* 1113, *φεύγων δ' ἀνὴρ ἦκει τε καὶ κατέρχεται*. With this is to be compared *Ag-* 1646 f., *'Ορέστης ἀρά που βλέπει φάος, ὅπως κατελθὼν δεῦρο κτλ.*, and the words of Aegisthus, 1639, *οἷδ' ἐγὼ φεύγοντας ἀνδρας ἐλπίδας σιτουμένους*."

The confession contained in the words *καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ σοῦ μάτας* makes it clear that Orestes' removal was a direct outgrowth of the queen's desire for security in her amour with Aegisthus, but it does not answer the question which most needs to be answered. Why did the far-sighted woman voluntarily seal her own doom by relinquishing her hold upon her son? She must have foreseen that as long as he remained alive he would be an ever-present menace to her security. Why, then, did she ever let him out of her hands? Why did she send him away into Phocis to grow up among his father's friends and return eventually as her destroyer? Why did she not exercise the self-restraint of which she was capable and put up with his presence until she was in a position to make away with him for good

and all? There seems to me only one rational answer to the question. She wished to avoid the alternative of taking his life; with all her capacity for crime, she shrank from the enormity of child-murder. Consistent interpretation of her character demands this small concession of righteousness to the 'godless woman.' As I understand our poet's conception of the causes which led to her moral downfall, the initial impulse that set her going on the path of iniquity was the dark anger of a mother brooding over the ruthless murder of her daughter. It was this feeling that gave rise to her desire for vengeance, and whatever criminal motives were afterwards added, it was a feeling that endured to the very end. It is impossible not to sympathize with her child-avenging hatred of her husband and it seems futile to belittle its sincerity. The furious outburst in which she vindicates herself against the incriminations of the elders is something more than hypocritical rant. She reveals a glimpse of her disinclination to further bloodshed in her restraining words to Aegisthus at the close of the *Agamemnon*:

μηδ' αὖτως, ὃ φίλτατ' ἀνδρῶν, ἄλλα δράσωμεν κακά.  
 ἀλλὰ καὶ τάδ' ἐξαμῆσαι πολλά δύστηνον θέρος,  
 πημονῆς δ' ἄλις γ' ὑπάρχει μηδὲν αἱματώμεθα.<sup>65</sup>

Why should Aeschylus have put these words into the mouth of a monster who lacked only the opportunity to imbrue her reeking hands afresh in the blood of her innocent and, it may have been, helpless child? Surely he did not conceive her as Sophocles did — as capable of turning from the work of avenging one child to the fiendish atrocity of murdering another. If this is true, her reason for sending Orestes away becomes obvious enough. It was the sole alternative left her. She would not destroy his life, and, inasmuch as she proposed to rob him of his inheritance, she could not allow him to remain at Argos. As the rightful heir to the throne and wealth of his fathers, his presence either at the time of Agamemnon's murder or thereafter would have been profoundly perilous to the success of her

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<sup>65</sup> 1654-57.

plan of usurpation; it would have greatly increased the chances of popular resistance<sup>22</sup> and sooner or later would have resulted in the certain ruin of both Aegisthus and herself. Her only hope of ultimate security lay in keeping Orestes helpless in exile and establishing herself so firmly at Argos as to defy assault from any quarter. With this understanding of the situation which confronted the designing queen, the inference which Professor Seymour draws from her confession of wantonness does not seem to me by any means necessary. The removal of Orestes before Agamemnon's return was a foregone conclusion, whether he was too old a youth to endure the sight of his mother's intimacy with Aegisthus or too much of a child to realize her shame and the wrong to his father. In other words, Clytemnestra would have adopted the same course whether she was seeking to avert a danger already present or merely to forestall one that loomed up in the more distant future. In either case, she was planning to bring about a condition of affairs that would enable her to give free rein to her passion for Aegisthus and she was selling her son into exile as a means to this end. Professor Seymour maintains that it was a sale for cash; it can just as warrantably be maintained that it was executed on a time basis and that the queen did not re-

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<sup>22</sup> That she had calculated the possibilities of a popular uprising is indicated in the fair-spoken apology to which Professor Seymour refers. Agamemnon, she explains, was in constant peril at Troy and in the event of his fall she feared his already murmuring subjects would turn in their insolent license upon his son. To guard against this danger she had taken time by the forelock and sent the child out of harm's way. The whole speech is strongly colored with irony and in no part of it, I believe, does the queen's daring hypocrisy veer closer to the real truth than in this. She caps her apology with the amazing assurance that 'it contains no element of guile.' To be sure it does not; we have only to follow the thread of truth that underlies it and we have forthwith a lucid exposition of her real purpose in getting rid of Orestes. It was not an uprising *against* the son and heir of the fallen king that she feared, but an uprising *in his behalf* and directed against those who had slain his father and robbed him of his inheritance, namely, herself and Aegisthus.

ceive nor expect to receive payment until after the death of Agamemnon. There is nothing to indicate and it is far from probable that Orestes divined her purpose at the time. The accusation which he brings against her is thoroughly natural, if it proceeded only from an after-realization of the wrong that had been done him and the motive which inspired it.

I have already advanced the contention that Orestes could not have been an exile either in his own eyes or the eyes of the world until the conspirators uncloaked their designs in murdering Agamemnon. But at any rate, whether he was driven into open banishment or not, there is no reason why a *child* may not be exiled or described as an exile. The Euripidean Orestes is so represented at the time of his rescue, *El.* 541: 'Ὀρέστης ἡνίκ' ἐκπίπτει χθονός. In the decree of banishment issued against Medea her children are specifically included, though they are afterwards absolved from the sentence.<sup>43</sup> The tender age of these children is proved by the fact that they are still under the care of a *τρόφος*. Aegisthus tells us that he was driven into exile, along with his father it is true, *while an infant in swathing clothes*: μ' ἀθλίῳ πατρὶ συνεξελάυνει τυτθὸν ὄντ' ἐν σπαργάνοις.<sup>44</sup> These cases prove, I think, that the characterization of the Aeschylean Orestes as an exile is practically worthless as an indication of his age either at the time of his banishment or at the time of his father's death. The words of Aegisthus, οἷδ' ἐγὼ φεύγοντας ἄνδρας ἐλπιδας σιτουμένους, are manifestly proverbial, as is evidenced by Eur. *Phoen.* 396, αἱ δ' ἐλπίδες βόσκουσι φυγάδας, ὡς λόγος. Ἄνδρας is generic in meaning. The emphatic ἐγὼ shows that the speaker is pointing the observation from his own experience: "No one knows better than *I* that exiles feed on hopes." Are we to suppose that the speaker had fed upon hope as a man and not as a boy?

Clytemnestra's apology to her husband for his son's absence seems to me perfectly natural whether we regard Orestes as a child of ten or a man of twenty. As an only son, Orestes' wel-

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<sup>43</sup> *Med.* 90-72, 949-53, 966, 971, 1001, 1155.

<sup>44</sup> *Ag.* 1605-6.

fare was of far more importance to his father than that of Electra. His death would have meant the extinction of Agamemnon's name and race.<sup>65</sup> This reason alone would have justified the queen in apologizing for his absence.

If the presumptions I have raised against the cogeny of Professor Seymour's arguments are well grounded, it is futile to contend that the Aeschylean Orestes must have been a youth well advanced toward manhood when he was sent away into Phocis. Every piece of evidence adduced in support of this thesis is easily reconcilable with the counter-thesis that he was still a child at the time mentioned.

## 3.

"The lamentations of the chorus of the *Choephoroi* on their entrance are more natural when understood as following soon after Agamemnon's death. The cheeks of the women are torn by their nails, their garments are rent in their grief, ἀγέλαστοις ξυμφοραῖς πεπληγμένων.

I have already advanced the contention that our poet's purpose was to create an impression of recent burial in the opening action of the *Choephoroi*. The appearance of the entering chorus unquestionably conduces to this end. One feels that the period of mourning for the dead king is just beginning and the feeling does not rapidly pass away. It is only when we look deeper into the situation and sift out the true facts that we realize how frail a basis it rests upon. It should be borne in mind that Electra and the chorus are not acting at the outset on their own authority, but as the self-confessed, and, it is everywhere apparent, the constrained agents of Clytemnestra. The visit to the tomb, however agreeable to their inclinations, was not a matter of their own initiative; it was a mission imposed upon them by the queen. This fact, of itself, is sufficient to raise a question as to the real responsibility for the bodily lamentations of the chorus. When we reflect that

<sup>65</sup> Cf Eur. *I. T.* 57: στυλοὶ γὰρ οἴκων παῖδές εἰσιν ἄρσενες.



these outward extravagances fall completely into the background after the first number of the *parodos* and that in what follows there is properly speaking no lamentation for the dead whatever, we are thoroughly prepared to believe that they were assumed at the command and in the interest of Clytemnestra and that the old women laid them aside as pious mockeries with which they had no sympathy. In thorough accord with this conclusion is the fact that the queen's libations were not simply *μελάνια*, but *καὶ κήδεα* as well. Part of her purpose, as I conceive it, was to make good, so far as it lay in her power, the funeral honors she had denied her victim at burial.<sup>66</sup> The repairing of this terrible insult was an obvious *sine qua non* to the success of any attempt she might make at propitiation: at the same time it was the most natural and ingenuous means of propitiation she could have chosen. In accordance with this plan she selected as her representatives the staunchest of Agamemnon's friends and forced them into the guise of mourners and intercessors. She invested the slave-women, who may have been Orientals and thereby particularly adapted to her purpose, with all the conventional ear-marks of impassioned grief and bade them lament in accepted fashion the "unlamented" dead as a substantial atonement for past indignities and as an earnest of the sincerity of her peace-offerings. With this view of the situation, which seems to me the only one that satisfies the requirements of the case, the "lamentations" of the chorus and their abrupt termination are fully explained. In the opening strophe the old women are fresh from the presence of the intimidating queen and still under the restraint of her influence. Their initial attitude is one of compliance with her instructions. They make the best of the situation and for a passing moment mould their actual grief for the dead king into verbal accord with their bodily make-up, but by the time they have narrated the circumstances which gave rise to their mission their courage revives and they shake off for good and all the role assigned them. The feelings which dominate them

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<sup>66</sup> 428-32.

through the remainder of the song are hatred of the murderer-tyrants, anguish for the deplorable consequences of their master's death and pity for their own miserable lot. Of direct lamentation for Agamemnon there is not a trace. They tell us of *secret* wailing but that is all. Their grief is quiet and unobtrusive, it is not a grief that would *of itself* lacerate the cheek or rend the clothing. These marks of frenzied feeling are merely an alien dress into which it is forced by circumstances. They are piacular devices by means of which the frightened queen sought to appease the anger of her murdered husband and, as such, they constitute no indication whatever that his death was a recent occurrence. The dream which occasioned her anxiety would be plausible enough, even if it took place, as in Sophocles' play, years after her crime was committed.

## 4.

"An interesting bit of circumstantial evidence tending to show that the action of the *Choephori* followed soon after that of the *Agamemnon*, in my opinion, is found in *Cho.* 797 ff., where Orestes after the death of his mother brings upon the scene the blood-stained garment in which his father was entangled at the bath, before the murderous blows were struck. This robe is stretched before the chorus, and the attention of men and gods is called to the dye of blood as evidence of the queen's guilt. The supposition is extremely improbable that this garment so stained with blood should have been preserved by the 'butcher queen' for eight years, as if it were a pleasant memorial, kept in a convenient place where Orestes could find it at once. On the other hand, nothing could be more effective than the discovery by Orestes of the manner of Agamemnon's death, before Clytemnestra had had a convenient opportunity to destroy the evidence; he thus takes her 'red-handed.'"

The presumption here raised is amply disposed of by Professor Seymour's own reckoning of the age of the blood-stains. It is perfectly evident that a murderess who could leave the evidence of her guilt undestroyed for a whole week could leave it

undestroyed for a longer period. If the destruction of the robe was a matter of such obvious self-interest to the queen as Professor Seymour seems to assume, why did she not dispose of it immediately? At the time of the murder Orestes was a good half-week's foot-journey<sup>67</sup> distant from home. There is no intimation that a special messenger was despatched to carry him the news; the circumstances lead us to suppose that the first intelligence reached him in the natural course of trade and travel, that is only after much possible delay. But even with the most liberal concessions in favor of expedition, he cannot be supposed to have made his appearance in Argos within less than a week after the murder took place. And yet during all this time Clytemnestra had left the tell-tale evidence of her crime untouched. It is futile to argue that she lacked a convenient opportunity to dispose of it. She had undisputed possession of the palace and could have made away with it at any moment, had she so desired; and, besides, murderers who are anxious to remove the incriminating traces of blood-shed make opportunities and do not wait for them. Why, then, I repeat, did she not destroy the robe at the outset?

The answer is obvious. Its destruction was a matter of no consequence to her. Indeed, one is inclined to ask why she should have even thought of destroying it. So far as she herself was concerned, the blood-stains which dyed it were quite useless and superfluous as incriminating evidence. They told no tale but one that she had already told in ringing accents with her own lips. Her whole attitude throughout the final action of the *Agamemnon* is one of malignant triumph. Far from concealing her crime or attempting to conceal it, she proclaimed it from the house-top: she was proud of murdering her husband, she exulted in it, gloated over it. In her own words, the spurting blood of the dying king was as sweet to her senses as heaven's rain to the bursting corn-ears. Plainly, she had nothing to fear from the witness-bearing voices of the bloody robe or a thousand like them. Indeed, one might fancy that

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<sup>67</sup> That he returned on foot is clear from 671-72.

they were truly enough a source of delight to her. A woman who could bear herself as Clytemnestra does in the hour of shocking iniquity and follow it up by renouncing the most elemental instincts of motherhood would be capable of any abnormality of feeling. The dry stains upon the entangling garment could hardly have been so exhilarating as the warm drops that moistened her own clothing, but, as pleasurable reminders of a truly delectable triumph, their very contemplation may have afforded her a certain fiendish satisfaction. But in any case, whether she regarded the robe as a trophy of victory to be treasured or simply passed it over in negligence, she had not the slightest reason for destroying it as incriminating evidence.

As far as Orestes was concerned, his sole purpose in directing attention to the evidential significance of the robe was self-vindication.<sup>98</sup> It represented to him not so much his mother's criminality, a fact of which he was never for a moment in doubt, as the immitigable brutality and treachery<sup>99</sup> with which her crime was committed. It brought him for the first time into realistic touch with the revolting details of his father's murder; and under the stimulus thus supplied he seizes upon the unpardonableness of the crime which he has avenged as a powerful argument in his own defence. The blood-voices which bear testimony to the inexpiable guilt of his mother are at the same time, and in far larger part, absolving voices testifying to his own innocence. He clings to the robe with the desperation of a drowning man; it is the last straw that bears him up against the overwhelming sense of helpless criminality which soon sweeps him away into a delirium of doubt and dark foreboding. With this understanding of the evidential significance of the robe, I cannot see that its age has any material bearing on the dramatic effect produced by its discovery. The moral conflict which takes possession of Orestes is equally natural and intelligible whether we think of it as occurring eight days or "eight years" after the murder of his father.

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<sup>98</sup> 986.

<sup>99</sup> 995-1002.

## 5.

"One further indication of time is found in the dialogue of the scene<sup>70</sup> to which I have just referred. On Athena's arrival and in response to her questions, Orestes not merely tells her who he is but narrates in detail the death of his father. But if Agamemnon had been dead for eight or ten years, surely Athena would have heard of it! The Greek tragic poets, to be sure, often represent their characters as ignorant of what they must have known. For instance we should say that it was hardly complimentary to Theseus or his city for Sophocles to make Oedipus inquire (*O. C.* 68) who was king of Athens! But such statements are for the sake of the audience, while in the Orestean trilogy no reminder of the death of the king was needed for the sake of the spectators. But if we understand that the poet wished to represent Athena as still in ignorance of the fate of Agamemnon all difficulty vanishes, and the speech of Orestes is just what is desired."

This argument can be answered in a single sentence. Athena's ignorance of Agamemnon's death is merely assumed; it is not the ignorance of the goddess herself, but of the judge in whose person she is acting. The scene referred to is judicial from beginning to end. It is obviously preliminary to the more formal proceedings on the Areopagus and as such it embodies the essential features of an examining trial. It should be borne in mind that both Orestes and his pursuers came to Athens with definite anticipations. They knew before leaving Delphi that the final settlement of their case was to be in the hands of Athena. They knew furthermore that it was to be decided by judicial processes.<sup>71</sup> From the very moment of their arrival they are consciously cast in the role of defendant and accuser presenting themselves for examination and trial.<sup>72</sup> They are parties to a criminal action awaiting the entrance of the judge and the opening of court. As for the goddess herself,

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<sup>70</sup> 400 ff.

<sup>71</sup> 79 ff., 224.

<sup>72</sup> 243, 260.

every reasonable presumption would lead us to suppose that she understood<sup>73</sup> beforehand the part she was to play. At any rate, whether designedly or accidentally, she instantly conforms to the requirements of the situation and, without a word of explanation from either Orestes or the Furies, assumes the bearing and methods of a judicial examiner.<sup>74</sup> She is sitting as a court which can take no cognizance of facts not supplied in evidence<sup>75</sup> and, as such she can know nothing of Agamemnon's

<sup>73</sup> We should infer this from Apollo's words (79-83) to Orestes at Delphi:

μολῶν δὲ Παλλάδος ποτὶ πόλιν  
Ἰζου παλαιὸν ἄγκασθεν λαβὼν βρέτας.  
καὶ κεῖ δικαστὰς τῶνδε καὶ θελκτηρίου  
μύθους ἔχοντες μηχανὰς εὐρήσομεν  
ὅσῃ' ἐς τὸ πᾶν σε τῶνδ' ἀπαλλάξαι πονῶν.

He does not say "I" but "we will devise means etc." The context clearly shows that he includes Athena. The plural implies concerted action on the part of the two divinities; it implies that an agreement already existed or else that such a compact would exist by the time Orestes reached Athens. The spirit of the passage is distinctly in favor of the former alternative. Apollo speaks as one who is sure of his arrangements (cf. 224). The mode of trial which he promises is exactly that which Athena adopts—a truly surprising coincidence, if the plan of a jury-court was independently arrived at by both gods.

<sup>74</sup> 411 ff., 416-417.

<sup>75</sup> If I am not wrong in my interpretation, she expressly declares this in the closing line (445) of her instructions to the defendant:

τί πρὸς τὰδ' εἰπεῖν, ὧ ξέν', ἐν μέρει θέλεις;  
λέξας δὲ χῶραν καὶ γένος καὶ συμφορὰς  
τὰς σᾶς, ἔπειτα τόνδ' ἀμυναθοῦ φόγον·  
εἴπερ πεποιθὼς τῇ δίκῃ βρέτας τόδε  
ἦσαι φυλάσσων ἐστίας ἀμῆς πέλας  
σεμνὸς προδίκτωρ ἐν τρόποις ἱέλιος  
τούτοις ἀμείβου πᾶσιν εὐμαθὲς τί μοι.

445.

The phraseology of the admonition is highly significant: "Your answer to these charges must be such *that I may easily understand it.*" The obvious import of the words cannot be evaded. They distinctly imply that Athena's ability to understand was in some way limited; and, inasmuch as we cannot account for the limitation by supposing that she was really lacking in intelligence and that her purpose was to warn

murder or any other fact bearing upon the matricide's case. Her ignorance would have been the same if she had been an eye witness of the murder; she would have been equally blind whether the king had been dead ten years or ten days.

## 6.

"If the proof of my main thesis seems still incomplete, Athena comes to my aid in *Eumenides* 393 ff. She hears the appeal of Orestes as suppliant at her shrine, and comes with speed at the call from the land of the Scamander, where (as she

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Orestes of the fact, we are forced to the conclusion that she was hindered in the free exercise of her intelligence by some artificial restraint. As to the nature of this restraint, it could hardly have been other than that which I have indicated above. The words are spoken by Athena in the character of a judge. They signify "You must speak clearly, for the court can know nothing but plainly-stated facts." This caution to clearness of speech would seem to have been an established custom with Athenian magistrates in the examination of witnesses. Compare the direction given by Bdelycleon to the testifying Cheese-scraper in the mock trial of the *Wasps*, 964:

ἀπόκριναι σαφῶς,  
εἰ μὴ κατέκνησας τοῖς στρατιώταις ἀλαβές;

With this understanding of the admonition given to Orestes, let us examine line 423. The goddess opens the proceedings with an inquiry as to the identity of the parties before her. The Furies, as the accusers in the case about to be submitted, take the initiative and in conformity with the question asked explain their *parentage, name and place of abode*. After an assurance of comprehension on the part of the examiner, they proceed to the matter of their *occupation*, so to speak:

τιμὰς γε μὲν δὴ τὰς ἐμὰς πεύσει τάχα.

Athena rejoins:

μάθοιμ' αν, εἰ λέγοι τις ἐμφανῆ λόγον.

"I might learn, if one would show a plain tale;" a touch of ironic scorn for the dark hints of the chorus,"—*Sidgwick*. According to this explanation, the goddess is actuated solely by personal feeling. She interprets the words of the chorus as a reflection upon her intelligence. Their manner is certainly officious and, maybe, somewhat patronizing, but, when we bear in mind that they are prosecutors submitting their case to the judgment of a court, it seems obvious that they could not

explains) she is engaged in taking formal possession of the portion of the Trojan territory which the Achæans assigned to the sons of Theseus as part of the spoils of war on the capture of Troy. This is a delightfully artistic touch of the poet and a delicate reminder of the time of the action, if we suppose that Troy had been taken only a few days before; but entirely unmeaning and unreasonable if we suppose the sack of Troy to have preceded by eight or ten years. In the latter case, the question at once arises, why Athena had delayed so long the occupation of the land, and why she should be thus employed

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have intended offence. We must at least concede that Athena misinterprets them. Now, the question arises why did they lay themselves open to misinterpretation? It should be noted that they manifest throughout an accurate and minute knowledge of the established forms of judicial procedure—a knowledge which is by no means surprising, when we consider that they are in a sense professional prosecuting attorneys. The question as to their identity is no sooner put than they plunge forthwith into the regular order of business with all the assurance of knowing what is to be done and how to do it. In the outset, they guide Athena instead of being guided by her. It is under their leadership that the goddess passes subtly and unobtrusively from her own person into the formal functions of a judge. The matter of the oath requirement is sufficient of itself to prove their familiarity with the beaten track of the ἀνακρισίς; and it is just this technical knowledge which clears up the real meaning of the "hints" to which Professor Sidgwick refers. The suggested insinuation is simply a recognition of the fact that the goddess, in her *judicial* capacity, could know nothing with regard to their *τιμαί* except through the medium of a plainly-told tale. Returning now to Athena's rejoinder, I believe Professor Sidgwick's interpretation goes too far. I cannot agree with those who see no irony in her remark, but at the same time I believe she is actuated by something more than mere personal feeling. I believe that she seizes upon the opening presented by the manner of the chorus to proclaim (informally, as our poet's artistic purpose demanded) the very restriction which they recognize. Her words are outwardly a gentle thrust at the officiousness of the accusers; in deeper and essential significance they convey the conventional caution to clearness of speech:

"Fain would I learn them; speak them clearly forth." —*Morshead.*

Thus understood, the admonition follows naturally upon lines 416-17 as a further step in the unfolding of her judicial character.



at this particular moment. In my opinion, by the words of Athena the poet tells us distinctly that the action of the *Eumenides* followed immediately the close of the Trojan war, and hence immediately after the action of the *Agamemnon*."

The poet had already established a lapse of time since the sack of Troy and it probably did not occur to him that Athena's visit of occupation would be thought of as otherwise than long-delayed. So far as priori considerations are concerned, there was no reason why the Athenians should have taken immediate possession of the land. It was not territory acquired in a spirit of deliberate conquest. The leaders of the Trojan expedition were animated solely by lust of vengeance. Their punitive purpose involved not only the annihilation of Priam's race and city, but the desolation of his country as well. At the close of the war the whole Troad must have presented an aspect of widespread ruin. It was not territory in which a nominated possessor would have been in a hurry to establish himself. Such being the case, Athena's delay in taking formal possession of the part assigned to the sons of Theseus was natural enough and, it seems to me, in no need of being explained.

Our poet's purpose in representing her as thus engaged at the moment Orestes' cry reaches her is amply explained by the purpose which animated him throughout the *Eumenides*. Athena's recital of the circumstances which led to her absence is rendered artistically appropriate by virtue of the fact that it is addressed to the son and avenger of Agamemnon. Her words induced in Orestes the reassuring feeling that he had fallen among friends. They reminded him that the goddess and her city had aided his father in the destruction of Troy. And not only this; they were under obligation to his father in the matter of the landed spoils allotted the Athenians as a reward for their services. So much for the dramatic significance of the explanation. Its real significance lay in the patriotic allusions which it enabled the poet to introduce. It gave him first of all an opportunity to remind an Athenian audience of the participation of Athenian heroes in the most glorious achievement of

the early Greek world. According to the older story of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the part played by Athens in the Trojan war was all too small, and it is not surprising to find the tragedians<sup>76</sup> seizing upon the generous recognition accorded the sons of Theseus in the later epic. Least of all is it surprising that the patriot-poet of the *Persians*, who had lived and shared in the crowning glories of Marathon and Salamis, should have cherished the sentiment that his country had borne a strenuous hand in that earlier humiliation of insolent Asia. It was a sentiment that must have been dear to every Athenian heart and its introduction in the *Eumenides* was thoroughly justified by the patriotic purpose of the play. Part and parcel with the direct allusion there is an obvious foreglimpse at the quarrel which subsequently arose with Mytilene over the ownership of Sigeum—a quarrel which, it should be remembered, eventually terminated in the complete vindication of the claims set up by Athens. This long-continued and, apparently, bitter struggle is crowded out on the general canvas of Greek history, but to an Athenian of the tragic period it must have still loomed up as an incident shedding no inconsiderable lustre upon his country's name. Thus understood, Athena's explanations are just as excusable and significant as her subsequent allusion to the Amazonian invasion. They were addressed to the national pride of a triumphant people who gloried deep in their past.

With regard to *καταφθαιμένη*, I have so far proceeded on Professor Seymour's assumption that it means simply *taking possession of*. My own belief is that Müller<sup>77</sup> was right in contending that the word means something more than this. So far as presumption goes, and we have nothing better to depend upon, the probabilities are rather for than against the thesis that it is a derivative of *φθάνω*. The thesis has, to be sure, been questioned, but that is all. No satisfactory case has ever been made out for a different etymology. So long, then, as the assumed connexion with *φθάνω* is not disproved, we are certainly

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Soph. *Phil.* 562; Eur. *Hec.* 125, *Troad.* 31, *I. A.* 247.

<sup>77</sup> *Eum.* p. 123. Cf. Paley, 376 n.

justified in interpreting the word accordingly. The idea prominent is that of *anticipation*. Athena was not only taking possession of the land, but she was at the same time forestalling seizure by some foreign power. If this is true, her unexplained delay presents no difficulty whatever. The land was not occupied in natural course, but as a precautionary measure rendered necessary by exceptional circumstances. It was in danger of being usurped by foreigners and it was to avert this danger that Athena took hurried possession of it. A contingency of this character could obviously have arisen at any time and, for aught that *καταφθατούμένη* implies, a period of many years might have elapsed before the goddess's visit of occupation took place. With this understanding of the passage, the allusion to the struggle over Sigeum becomes all the more pointed. The imaginary usurpation which the goddess sought to forestall was intended to prefigure the actual seizure of the territory in after years by the Mytileneans.

#### SUMMARY.

With this review of the short-interval theory my inquiry into the length of time which Aeschylus assumed as elapsing between the death of Agamemnon and the return of Orestes is brought to an end.

I believe that he accepted in substance the reckoning of this interval which his predecessors had already made current. He did not take the trouble to convey any precise conception of its length (it may be that he did not take the trouble to form one), but I believe he thought of it generally as a goodly period of years and that he has time and again so represented it in the later action of the *Choephoroi*.

In the early action of the play and at the close of the *Agamemnon* this interval of years is so much obscured that it would easily pass for the few-days interval which Professor Seymour endeavors to establish. I have already touched upon the reason for this temporary obscurity. It emanated from our poet's desire to make the *Oresteia* as complete a dramatic whole

as possible. In the pursuance of this end he was naturally guided by the same laws of dramatic unity which he observed in the *Prometheus* and *Agamemnon*. In other words, he considered it essential that the complementary divisions of his action, however widely separated in time, should be made to appear as continuous as possible. This is clearly evidenced in the exaggerated rapidity with which the action of the *Eumenides* is made to follow upon that of the *Choephoroi*. When the terror-stricken matricide rushes off the scene with the phantom Furies at his heels, we do not expect him to travel slowly, but we do expect him to spend a reasonable amount of time in making a journey of such length as that from Argos to Delphi. Instead of this, he reaches his destination before the blood upon his hands is dry. When we first get sight of him after his arrival, this blood is still fresh and dripping; it stains the *omphalos* to which he clings as a suppliant. Moreover, he not only retains possession of the sword with which he slew his mother, but the priestess unhesitatingly describes it as "newly-drawn." From these indications we should conclude that Orestes had passed immediately from the palace of the Atreidae into the sanctuary of Apollo and that his crime was less than an hour old. It is only when we turn to the sleeping Furies who surround him that we get for the first time a glimpse of the real truth. The fatigue which plunges them into involuntary slumber clearly points to a toilsome journey of no trifling duration. As a matter of fact we must suppose that it occupied a period of two or three days at the least. The case, therefore, stands thus. The actual length of time which elapses between the close of the *Choephoroi* and the opening of the *Eumenides* is, we will say for the sake of being definite, three days. As dramatically presented this period is at first reduced to the compass of a single hour; and then, when the obscuration has served its purpose in establishing the continuity of action desired, it is restored as far as possible to its proper perspective. It is just this character of dramatic treatment which I claim was applied to the interval of years between the *Agamemnon* and *Choepho-*

ri. In the outset, the poet illusively represents it as an interval of only a few days, and then, as the action progresses, gradually restores it to its real compass.

## B.

## THE CHOEPHORI.

With regard to the *Choephoroi* little need be said. The first division of the action (1-582) takes place, I think, in the early forenoon. Professor Campbell concludes from line 656 (τάχυνε δ', ὡς καὶ νυκτὸς ἄρμ' ἐπείγεται | σκοτανὸν) that the play opens in the "gloom of evening."<sup>78</sup> This seems to me quite improbable. The chorus describe the nocturnal disturbance in the palace as though it had just occurred:—

ἦ δ' ἐξ ὕπνου κέκλαγεν ἐπτοημένη.  
 πολλοὶ δ' ἀνῆθον, ἐκτυφλωθέντες σκότῳ,  
 λαμπτήρες ἐν δόμοισι δεσποίνης χάριν  
 πέμπει τ' ἔπειτα τάσδε κηδείους χοάς.<sup>79</sup>

After rousing the sleeping household in this fashion, why should the terrified queen allow the whole day to elapse before sending forth her offerings? It seems far more reasonable to assume a "silent" lapse of time between Orestes' exit at line 582 and his reëntry at the beginning of the Second Act (649-934). The execution of his plan of vengeance would naturally be postponed until the hour of nightfall, the time above all others when the appearance of a stranger would be attended with the least suspicion.

The Third and Last Act (971-end) it seems to me must closely follow the Second in time.<sup>80</sup> To this it is objected that when Orestes exhibits the blood-stained robe the sun is still above the horizon. I see no insuperable difficulty in this circumstance. The words νυκτὸς ἄρμ' ἐπείγεται σκοτανὸν would most

<sup>78</sup> Sophocles: *Electra*, Introductory Analysis.

<sup>79</sup> 533-36.

<sup>80</sup> Professor Verrall holds that it takes place "on the next day" (Introduction, p. XVIII); Professor Campbell's view would seem to be the same (*Classical Review*, vol. IV, p. 304).

naturally signify that the "gloom of evening" was already gathering, but they need not mean anything more than that night was approaching; it is not imperative to suppose that the sun was already set. With this concession in favor of possibility, the appearance of the sun at line 982 can hardly be thought of as a serious contradiction. The intervening action is so rapid and engrossing that the poet may well have disregarded the flight of time as an element too trivial to be considered.

## C.

## THE EUMENIDES.

The action of the *Eumenides*, or, more precisely, that portion of it which takes place in the temple of Apollo, is, as we have seen, almost continuous with that of the *Choephoroi*. Between the action at Delphi, however, and that which follows at Athens, an extended lapse of time—a period of many weeks or months—must be assumed for the purificatory wanderings of Orestes.

The protracted character of these wanderings seems to me sufficiently established by the collective and cumulative testimony of the following passages:

## 1.

ὅμως δὲ φεύγε μὴδὲ μαλθακὸς γένη.  
 ἐλῶσι γάρ σε καὶ δι' ἡπείρου μακρᾶς  
 βεβῶντ' ἄν αἰεὶ τὴν πλανοστιβῇ χθόνα  
 ὑπὲρ τε πόντον καὶ περιρρύτας πόλεις·  
 καὶ μὴ πρόκαμνε τόνδε βουκολούμενος  
 πόνον.<sup>81</sup>

"But thou, flee far and with unfaltering speed:  
 For they shall hunt thee through the mainland wide  
 Where'er throughout the tract of traveled earth  
 Thy foot may roam, and o'er and o'er the seas  
 And island homes of men. Faint not nor fail,  
 Too soon and timidly within thy breast  
 Shepherding thoughts forlorn of this thy toil."

—*Morshead.*

<sup>81</sup> 74-79.

In connection with these admonishments we may quote the assurance with which Apollo begins his speech:

οὔτοι προδώσω· διὰ τέλους δέ σοι φύλαξ  
ἐγγὺς προσιτῶς καὶ πρῶσω δ' ἀποστατῶν  
ἐχθροῖσι τοῖς σοῖς οὐ γενήσομαι πέπων.<sup>82</sup>

Διὰ τέλους seems to be an express recognition of the distantness of the matricide's final deliverance.

## 2.

ἄνασσ' Ἀθάνᾳ, Λοξίου κελεύμασιν  
ἤκω, δέχου δὲ πρευμαίνῳς ἀλάστορα,  
οὐ προστρέπαιον οὐδ' ἀφοίβαντον χέρα,  
ἀλλ' ἀμβλὺν ἤδη προστετριμμένον τε πρὸς  
ἄλλοισιν οἴκοις καὶ πορεύμασιν βροτῶν,  
ὁμοία χέρσον καὶ θάλασσαν ἐκπερῶν,  
σφίζων ἐφετμῶς Λοξίου χρηστηρίους,  
πρόσειμι δῶμα καὶ βρέτας τὸ σόν, θεά.<sup>83</sup>

"O Queen Athena, I at Loxias' hest  
Am come: do thou receive me graciously,  
Sin-stained though I have been: no guilt of blood  
Is on my soul, nor is my hand unclean,  
But now with stain toned down and worn away,  
In other homes and journeyings among men,  
O'er land and water traveling alike,  
Keeping great Loxias' charge oracular,  
I come, O Goddess, to thy shrine and statue."

—Plumptre.

## 3.

ἐγὼ διδαχθεὶς ἐν κακοῖς ἐπίσταμαι  
πολλοὺς καθαρμούς, . . . . .  
βρίζει γὰρ αἷμα καὶ μαρτύνεται χερὸς,  
μητροκτόνον μίασμα δ' ἐκπνυτον πέλει.  
ποταίνιον γὰρ ὃν πρὸς ἐστίᾳ θεοῦ  
Φοίβου καθαρμοῖς ἠλάβη χοιροκτόνους.  
πολὺς δέ μοι γένοιτ' ἂν ἐξ ἀρχῆς λόγος,  
δοσοι προσήλθον ἀβλαβέῃ ξυνουσίᾳ.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>82</sup> 65-66.

<sup>83</sup> 235-42.

<sup>84</sup> 276-85.

"I, schooled in many miseries, have learnt  
 How many refuges of cleansing shrines  
 There be; . . . . .  
 . . . Look, how the stain of blood  
 Is dull upon my hand and wastes away,  
 And laved and lost therewith is the deep curse  
 Of matricide; for while the guilt was new,  
 'Twas banished from me at Apollo's hearth,  
 Atoned and purified by death of swine.  
 Long were my word if I should sum the tale,  
 How oft since then among my fellow-men  
 I stood and brought no curse."

—Morshead,

He closes this vindication of his purity by emphasizing, as Paley explains, "the mitigating effects of *time* as tending still further to deaden and wear away his offence": χρόνος καθαιρεί πάντα (*even the stain of matricide*) γηράσκων ὁμοῦ.<sup>85</sup>

4.

πάλαι πρὸς ἄλλοις ταῦτ' ἀφιερῶμεθα  
 οἴκοις, καὶ βοτοῖσι καὶ ῥντοῖς πόροις.<sup>86</sup>

"Long since have I this expiation done,—  
 In many a home, slain beasts and running streams  
 Have cleansed me."

—Morshead.

5.

πολλοῖς δὲ μόχθοις ἀνδροκμήσιν φνυσίᾳ  
 σπλάγχνον χθονὸς γὰρ πᾶς πεποιμέναι τόπος,  
 ὑπὲρ τε πόντον ἀπτέρους ποτήμασιν  
 ἦλθεν διάκουσ', οὐδὲν ὑστέρα νεώς.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> 286. I see no sufficient reason either for changing καθαιρεί to καθάπτει or for condemning the line as an interpolation. The perfect cleanness of which Orestes boasts was not the result of a *single* cleansing but the gradual outcome of *numerous* cleansings undergone in many different places and, therefore, at many different times; and, as such, it was a work in which *time* was very naturally thought of as participating. It seems also natural enough that Orestes should have made use of a proverb in emphasizing this participation.

<sup>86</sup> 454-55.

<sup>87</sup> 248-51.



"And inwardly we pant, for many a day  
 Toiling in chase that shall fordo the man;  
 For o'er and o'er the wide land have I ranged,  
 And o'er the wide sea, flying without wings,  
 Swift as a sail I pressed upon his track."

—*Morshead.*

With *πεποιμάνται* compare the use of the verb in the command which Apollo lays upon Hermes:

φύλασσε, κάρτα δ' ὦν ἐπώνυμος  
 πομπαῖος ἴσθι, τόνδε ποιμαίνων ἐμὸν  
 ἰκέτην.<sup>88</sup>

The metaphor in either case would seem to have been partially suggested by the devious course pursued. The track of the chase was so erratic that it resembled therein the trail of a grazing flock.

The foregoing passages make it perfectly clear that Orestes did not proceed directly to Athens, but that he first wandered far and wide on what appears to have been a prolonged pilgrimage of self-purification and atonement. Professor Seymour maintains that the circumstance of his traversing land and sea alike "is an indication of the route taken rather than the distance travelled." But why should he have chosen such a route? Why should he have traversed the sea and visited "the island homes of men" and ranged about over the whole earth, as it were, in order to reach an objective point comparatively close at hand and easily accessible in direct course over land? He seems to have followed the shortest road from Argos to Delphi, and, with Hermes to guide and protect him, there is no reason why he should not have taken a direct route from Delphi to Athens, had he so desired. Why then, I repeat, did he choose a route that no sane man, who desired only to reach his destination, would have thought of choosing? Plainly because he did not wish to reach his destination *immediately*. His reason for delay is clearly seen in the numerous ceremonial cleansings which he underwent and in the frequency with

<sup>88</sup> 90-92.

which he claims to have mingled in harmless intercourse with his fellow men. He wished to be thoroughly and lastingly cleansed of the pollution which attached to him as a murderer before venturing into the presence of Athena and claiming the complete absolution which Apollo had promised him. As he felt it, this pollution was too malignant and stubborn to vanish with a single cleansing or in a single hour; it had to be driven away gradually by repeated purifications and by long subjection to the mitigating effects of time. Hence his purificatory wanderings and the interval of weeks or months over which they seem to have extended.

In his account of these wanderings I believe Aeschylus followed closely the representations of the legendary account. It was not his purpose to tell a new and independent story, but rather to reduce to order and coherency the various legends which he found dealing either with the purification of the matricide or with the banishment of his madness. According to the tradition which has come down to us, and which there is no reason to suppose was unknown in the poet's day, Orestes is said to have visited a large number of places besides Delphi and Athens, among them Troezen in Argolis, Parrhasia in Arcadia and Rhegium beyond the sea. An itinerary like this — which, it should be observed, calls for weeks or months of uninterrupted travel — would correspond perfectly with that suggested in the Eumenides. Indeed, I believe it was just such an itinerary that the poet had in mind. The fact that he confined himself to general and, for the most part, shadowy allusions and refrained from any mention of particular places is easily explainable. First of all, there was no positive need of his introducing details which could be instantly supplied by the public for which he was writing. In the second place, he had an excellent dramatic reason for not introducing them. To have specified the places actually visited by Orestes would have dispelled any and all uncertainty as to the distance which he traveled and given thereby an unnecessary distinctness to the weeks or months which elapsed between his departure from

Delphi and his arrival at Athens. As I conceive it, the poet's reasoning with regard to this lapse of time was something like this: "As an essential factor in the purification and redemption of the matricide, it must be carefully insisted upon; as marking a serious break in the continuity of the action, its actual length should be so obscured that the action at Athens will appear to follow that at Delphi without appreciable delay." In the face of this dilemma, he naturally had recourse to an indeterminate and, therefore, unimportunate lapse of time which by delicate touches could be made to appear either long or short without giving rise to a sense of serious contradiction. The illusory show of a short interval has its first noticeable beginning in the commission which Apollo lays upon Hermes at Delphi. The mere fact that Orestes is specially provided with an attendant to guide and protect him is calculated to produce the feeling that he will not waste any time in reaching his destination. Furthermore, on leaving Delphi he has only a slight start of his fleet-footed pursuers, but on arriving at Athens he is still safely in the lead. One is possessed with the idea that the Furies have not had time to overtake him. The impression of speedy transition conveyed by this circumstance is greatly strengthened by the avowed swiftness with which they have actually pursued him:

*ὑπὲρ τε πόντον ἀπτέροις ποτήμασιν  
ἦλθον διώκουσ', οὐδὲν ὑστέρα νεώς.*

But the crowning evidence, which for a time deludes us almost to the point of mistaking appearance for reality, is supplied by the trail of blood which the matricide leaves behind him in his flight. On its face, this trail of blood would seem incontestable proof of the freshness of his crime. But, on looking deeper, we come to realize that it exists only for the eyes of the Furies and that its significance is purely symbolic. Any and every notion of newly-shed blood is definitely dispelled by Orestes' words in lines 280-85 (quoted above), and therewith the illusion of a short lapse of time is dissipated for good and all.

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